FRANÇOIS VILLON

J. U. NICOLSON

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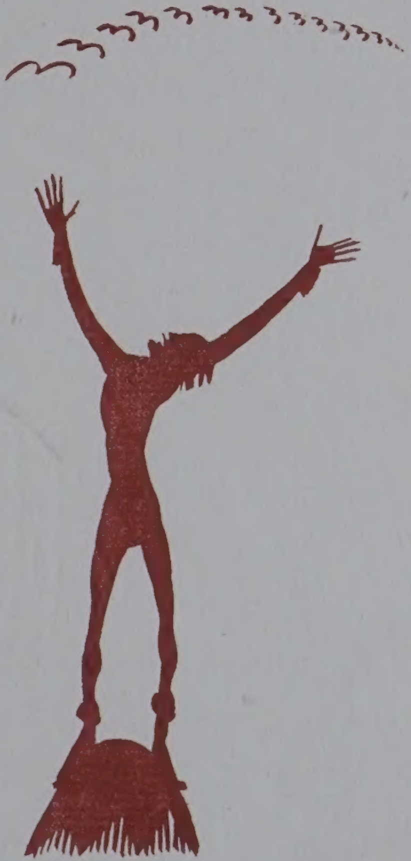


THE COMPLETE WORKS
OF
FRANÇOIS VILLON

BOOKS BY
J. U. NICOLSON

The King of the Black Isles, and Other Poems

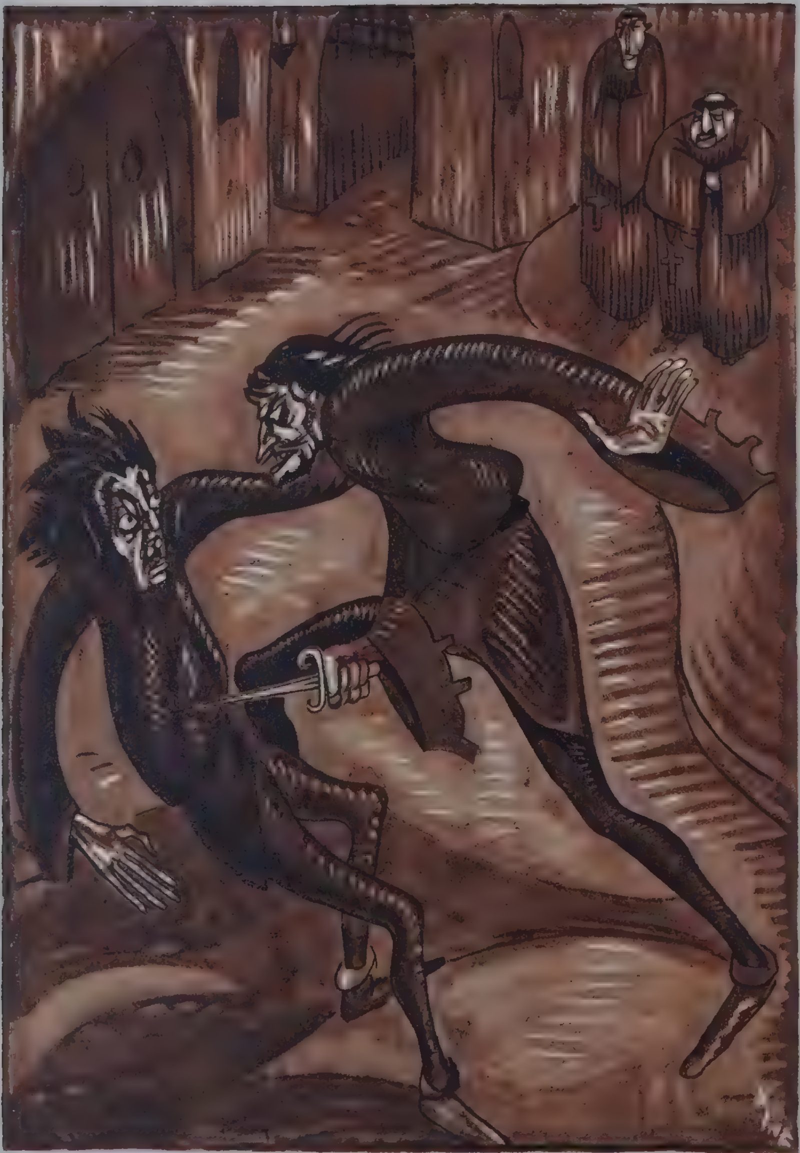
The Sainted Courtezan, and Other Poems

The Drums of Yle

The Road to Antioch

Sonnets of a Minnesinger, and Other Lyrics

Villon's Poems, Complete and Unexpurgated



. . . struck him . . . in the groin,
or thereabout

THE COMPLETE WORKS
OF
FRANÇOIS VILLON

TRANSLATED WITH AN
INTRODUCTION AND
NOTES BY

J. U. NICOLSON

ILLUSTRATIONS BY
ALEXANDER KING

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Introduction

I

IF Clément Marot was moved to exclaim of the works of François Villon, that he had never found another book "so incorrect, so grossly corrupted," I, in my turn, must say of the man himself, that I have seldom encountered another character so generally misunderstood. Little enough is known of him from writings other than his own, and that little is, in greater part, to his discredit. But a deal is to be learned from a close study of his poems, and this last is creditable or the reverse according as one looks at life through eyes of understanding or of prejudice. Many there are who cannot read Villon at all; not alone because his deeds, so far as they are known, were reprehensible, but because they find it impossible to accord him the glory of a true poet and genius—in short, because his verses do not carry that "message" of good-will, of hope, of peace, of reverence, or of whatnot, which they look to find in poetry. Others relegate him to mediocrity because they profess to find him narrow, platitudinous, egotistical, vulgar—the same charge that has been hurled at every outspoken poet below the stature of Shakespeare and Homer, all the world over. Others, still, and these are his admirers, have invested his lightest sigh with all the dignity and pathos of a broken heart; his contempt for the condition and superstitions of the people has been twisted into expressions of the loftiest sentiments of democracy; his envy of the rich has become the proud and noble passion for liberty; and from his bitter railing at all mankind, including himself, they have wrung a detached and rueful self-condemnation for his own dark deeds. That none of these groups has looked upon a presentment of the real Villon needs scarcely to be said. Something of what he was is to be gleaned by an honest and laborious process of analytical reasoning, but not here, more than elsewhere, is the truth to be come by through prejudice. And most of all must one avoid the false lineaments created by the writers of romance. To seek out and to portray a true, if shadowy, likeness of the author of the Great Testament, will be the immediate purpose of this essay.

Now, since the antecedents of any man bear no little part in the shaping of his identity, it will be well to begin our investigation with an attempt to learn what we can of the class of people from which our poet sprang. Here one primary line of research is open to us: we must consider the problem of his name, controversy regarding which has raged so long and to so little purpose. For it is surely of small moment to establish that Villon's name may really have been de Montcorbier, unless some light may be thereby reflected upon the character of the man. But if we can determine whether this poet was, by birth as well as by environment, a man of the people, or whether he was of noble ancestry but mean circumstances, then we shall have gone far toward an understanding of his attitude toward life, as it is hidden, rather than revealed, in his poems. And here is translated the "Letters of Remission" accorded by King Charles VII to "Master François des Loges, alias de Villon, convicted of murder upon the person of Phelippe Chermoye, priest":

CHARLES, by the grace of God, King of France:

Know all men by these presents: That we have received the humble supplication of Master François des Loges, alias de Villon, aged twenty-six years, or thereabout, setting forth: that upon the day of the Feast of Our Lord, the day being then passed over and it being come into the evening, after supper, he took his pleasure seated upon a rock situate under the dial of the clock of Saint Benoist-le-Bien-Tourné, in the great rue Saint Jacques, in our city of Paris; that within the cloister of Saint Benoist was at that time resident the said suppliant; that there were at that time present with him one Gilles, a priest, and one Ysabeau; and that it was upon the hour of nine o'clock, or hard upon. To the which place coming Phelippe Chermoye, priest, and Master Jehan le Mardi, the said Chermoye did forthwith, upon perceiving the said suppliant, say to him: "Now as God reigns, I have found you!" Whereupon the said suppliant arose, to give place to the other, and did there and then say to him: "Fair brother, what do you want?" The said Chermoye, thereupon, as the said suppliant arose to give him place, pushed him again vigorously onto that whereon it had suited him to be seated. Seeing which, the aforesaid le Mardi, Gilles and Ysabeau, supposing that the said Chermoye, what of the manner of his coming, had come but to make noise and to annoy and disgruntle the said suppliant, absented themselves, leaving only the said suppliant and Chermoye. Anon the said Chermoye, having within him an evil and damnable purpose, the which he had long meditated and resolved to put into execution, plucked a great dagger from under his robe and struck the said suppliant in the face with it, upon the under-lip, so deeply as to permit of the effusion of a deal of blood, as it then appeared and as it appears unto this present time. Whereupon the said suppliant, who, for the chill of the evening, wore about him a mantle, and who carried pendant from his girdle a dagger under the cloak, to evade the furious and evil intent of the said Chermoye, fearing that he should be harder pressed and being all the while vilified in his person, drew the said dagger and struck him, as it appears, in the groin, or thereabout, but not believing that his blow had gone home. And persisting the said Chermoye in his desire to defeat the said suppliant, pursuing and menacing him and heaping upon him divers improper insults, found then at his feet the said suppliant a loose stone or rock, the which he did thereupon take up into his hand and hurl into the face of the said Chermoye, incontinently leaving the place and departing to withdraw himself into retreat in the house of a barber or leech named Fouquet, in order to procure a dressing for his wound. This accomplished, the said Fouquet, in order to make his report in the matter, demanded of the said suppliant his name and the name of the adversary who had wounded him. To which the said suppliant responded, naming the name of the said Chermoye, to the end that upon the morrow he should be apprehended and constituted prisoner, and giving as his own the name of Michel Mouton. After the which event, in such manner transpired as has been set forth, some coming into the place where lay the said Chermoye, within the cloister, having in his hand his said dagger, they thereupon lifted him and bore him into a house of the said cloister and laid him therein upon a bed and caused him to be visited by a surgeon and his wound to be dressed; and on the morrow carried him to the Hôtel Dieu where, on the Saturday next ensuing, as a result of the said wound, and whether in default of good management or no, he left life and departed unto death. Resulting from the said event, the said suppliant, fearing the rigor of justice, absented himself from the country; and had never dared venture to return, save as he might invoke our mercy and grace, humbly representing therefor, that whereas heretofore in all things else he had governed and conducted himself well and honorably, never having been attainted, apprehended, nor convicted of any misdemeanor or crime whatsoever, nor subjected in any wise to public blame or reproach: we now extend upon him our said grace and mercy. Wherefore we, in consideration of that which has been said, preferring mercy to the inflexible rigor of justice, unto the said suppliant in the case aforesaid, have remitted, quitted and pardoned, and by the tenor of these presents, what of our especial grace, full power and royal authority, do remit, quit and pardon the overt act in the case aforesaid, together with all pain of punishment, amende and offense corporal, criminal and civil which should have or might have been incurred under the King's justice, conjointly with any and all defaults, banns, and appeals which in this case might or should have ensued, and we have restored and do hereby restore unto him his good and fair name and renown, and direct that the civil authority be considered to be satisfied, to which end we do hereby impose upon our prosecutor, that of this matter and cause he henceforth maintain silence in perpetuity. So give we in command by these presents unto the Provost of Paris or unto his lieutenant and unto all our other officers of justice or unto their lieutenants present and to come, and to each of them, his duty thereunto appertaining, that of our present grace, remission, quittance and pardon they cause, allow, suffer and leave the said suppliant in the enjoyment and use, fully and peaceably, without molestation, examination, let or hindrance, of body or of goods, now and for ever, in any wise whatsoever; and if his body or any of his goods now are or shall be, for the matter of this cause, taken, seized, arrested, held or hindered, then that they put the said body or goods, or cause them to be put, forthwith and without delay, to full and complete deliverance; and to the end that this writing be a firm thing and established for ever, we have hereunto caused to be affixed our seal upon these presents, reserving in other matters our full right, and of and to all other persons reserving our right in full.

Given at Saint Poursain, in the month of January, in the year of Grace One Thousand Four Hundred Fifty-Five (1456, New Style), and of our reign the Thirty-Fourth.

(Archives Nationales, JJ 187, pièce 149, folio 76)

The discovery of the above quoted and subsequent documents has led critics and editors into many ingenious speculations regarding the true name of the poet, the majority holding, however, that his name was probably de Montcorbier, but without explaining the relationship of the names des Loges, de Villon and Villon. But at least one writer of note has argued that de Montcorbier and des Loges were two individuals. To examine this argument in detail is to find out the errors within it, and in so doing, perhaps we may be able to arrive at a conclusion less open to adverse criticism. I quote from the writings of M. Paul La Croix, author of that curiously meticulous work, "The History of Prostitution":

"M. Auguste Vitu published, in 1873, in his *Notice sur François Villon,* this piece (Letters of Remission) which someone had sent him from the

National Archives after 1859. 'This first, this authentic document concerning our poet,' says he, 'has given me at a single stroke his name, his age, his lodging, and an important episode in his life—alas, too turbulent!' M. Vitu discovered, in the same registry where one had discovered these letters of remisson accorded to Master François des Loges, alias de Villon, other letters of remission nearly conforming to the first and relating to the same deed, accorded under the same date to Master François de Monterbier, Master of Arts. M. Vitu strives then to demonstrate that François de Monterbier was none other than François des Loges, or de Villon; but in seeking what could have been the origin of this name of Monterbier, attributed to Villon, he came to suppose that the scribe, by negligence or error, had written de Monterbier in place of de Montcorbier, which, would thus be the true name of François des Loges, alias de Villon. M. Longnon, in his *Etude Biographique sur François Villon,* is now come to prop up, eighteen years later, with new documents, the soundness of the supposition of M. Vitu, and has proved, in a manner nearly incontestible, that these letters of remission ought to carry the name Montcorbier in place of that of Monterbier. This point once established, he has retrieved, from the registers of the University of Paris: 'François de Montcorbier, of Paris *(Parisius)*, of the number of young scholars summoned for the degree of licentiate, then to that of master of arts, in 1457.*

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*Francois de Montcorbier was summoned for the licentiate, then for the degree of master of arts in 1452 (1453, N. S). Three years before he had been summoned for examination to the baccalaureate.—Translator.

He therefore has concluded that François de Montcorbier was François Villon, since the last named is not a single time mentioned in the registers of the University.

"Has not Villon said, in his Great Testament, that he was of poor and little extraction, and that his father had no great riches? Is it then possible to connect him with the noble family of the de Montcorbiers, which had at that time for chief 'nobleman Girard de Montcorbier, esquire,' and which possessed lands and goods in Bourbonnais? M. Vitu and M. Longnon would not have made this confusion of persons and of names had they been willing to see in these two letters of remission two different individuals: François des Loges, alias de Villon, and François de Montcorbier, Master of Arts. These two letters of remission carry the same date, January, 1455 (1456, N. S.), but they were not placed side by side in the files of the *Trésor des Chartes*, and the number of each of them indicates well enough in what order they were delivered by the royal chancellory to two distinct suppliants compromised and put in jeopardy for the same criminal offense. These letters of remission accorded to François de Montcobier *(Archives Nationales, JJ 183, pièce 67, folio 49)* recite divers circumstances which are not set forth in the letters of remission accorded to François des Loges, alias de Villon. Thus, after the aggressor, Philippe Sermoise (or Chermoye), wounded in the groin by his adversary, who flung a rock into his face, 'fell to earth,' without being able to strike François de Montcorbier, whom he pursued, dagger in hand, 'incontinently absented himself the said suppliant and went to change his dress.' It is not, then, a point at issue of the barber, named Fouquet, who dressed the wound of the suppliant that gave himself the name of Michel Mouton. The murderer of Philippe Chermoye was not recognized upon the field, because Philippe Chermoye had not denounced him: 'the which Phelippe was carried from the place and into the hôtel of the prisons of the said Saint Benoist, and forthwith examined by our certain Examiner of the Court of the Châtelet of Paris; the which Phelippe, asked by the said Examiner, should it happen that the said blow send him from life to death, would he that prosecution be made by his kinsmen or others against the said suppliant: to which he responded, "No," but that this cause be pardoned, and that he did pardon his death of the said suppliant for certain reasons therein to this moving him. And afterward was the said Phelippe carried to the Hôtel Dieu of Paris, and there, by fault of good management or otherwise, by reason of the aforesaid wounds, he passed from life into death. For the which cause, occurring in the manner that has been said, the said suppliant has been summoned by our right and against him we have proceeded to banishment from our realm, the which he should not dare more to frequent, cross nor keep, so our grace and mercy should not be over this imparted unto him, as he says, therein requiring us humbly that, considering how the said Phelippe, during his illness, had willed and ordered that no pursuit be made after the said suppliant, thus, by so much therein as by him it could have been done, he had pardoned and would pardon the said suppliant.'

"The same terms of these letters of remission, accorded nominally to François de Montcorbier, prove that this master of arts had been first incriminated upon the subject of the murder of Philippe Chermoye; that he hid himself from the pursuit of justice; and that, upon cause evoked by the Court of the Châtelet of Paris, François de Montcorbier, and not François des Loges, was alone condemned, in default, to banishment from the realm. It is not possible now to know whether this François de Montcorbier played a really active role at the scene of the murder, or whether the accusation directed against him had taken a false route and fixed upon an innocent man. One could believe, meanwhile, that François de Montcorbier was not absolutely a stranger to the dark event which had found a victim, since he had not cared to present himself before justice and to confront personally the consequences of a criminal trial. As matters were, the condemnation, in default, pronounced against François de Montcorbier did not strike François des Loges, alias de Villon, who would naturally benefit by the letters of remission accorded to another concerning the deed which he knew to have been his own. One explains in such wise the new letters of remission which were delivered in his name.

"These new letters are dated at Saint Pourçain, while the first were of Paris. One supposes, then, that the King, who passed the winter of 1455 in

Bourbonnais and who was yet there in January, 1456, had sent and, in consequence, *given* at Paris the letters of remission accorded to François de Montcorbier, who was condemned and banished by the Court at Paris and who, without such letters of remission, would not have been able to take up again his activities as master of arts at the University of Paris. As to Villon, who had never been master of arts, but was a simple scholar at the University, he was out of Paris and did not figure in the trial of the murderer of Chermoye; he kept himself at a distance from the capital, journeying or residing in the provinces, probably in Bourbonnais, perhaps, even, in the chateau of the Duke of Bourbon at Souvigny. It is there, under the beneficent influence of his protectors, that he would petition, without doubt, his 'more than father' *(plus que père)*, or father by adoption, the canon Guillaume de Villon; it is at Saint Pourçain that he pleaded his cause before the King and the Council, thereupon declaring himself the sole author of the murder, for the which his friend, François de Montcorbier, had been prosecuted, condemned and pardoned. The Council of the King, in this state of affairs, could hardly refuse him the new letters of remission, which were delivered to him in his true name, under the same date as the first, which had been granted without reason if it were not to shelter François de Montcorbier from the effects of the sentence of banishment under which he had fallen in evading pursuit and allowing condemnation by default, in lieu and in place of Master François des Loges, alias de Villon."

A recapitulation of the foregoing seems to show: (a) That letters of remission were accorded, from Paris, to one François de Montcorbier, in January of the year 1455 (1456, N. S.); (b) that they were recorded in the *Archives Nationales as JJ 183, pièce 67, folio 49*; (c) that François de Montcorbier, leaving the scene of the murder, had gone home, changed his dress, and forthwith absented himself from Paris and the reach of the King's justice; (d) that, despite the wish of the victim that no prosecution be instituted, nevertheless, upon the initiative of the court at Paris, trial was had of de Montcorbier, who, although not present, was found guilty and sentenced to banishment; (e) that the murder having occurred on June 5, 1454 (1455, N. S.), the day of the Fête-Dieu, de Montcorbier succeeded, by January of the year ensuing, in prevailing upon the Crown to pardon the crime for which, rightly or not, he lay still under sentence of banishment; (f) and that François des Loges, alias de Villon, alias Michel Mouton, who, following the dressing of his wound by the barber Fouquet, must also have absented himself from Paris, learning of the remission of punishment accorded to François de Montcorbier, presented his own petition and was accorded like letters of remission in the same month of January, which second letters were delivered from Saint Pourçain and were recorded and preserved in the *Archives*

Nationales as *JJ 187, pièce 149, folio 76.*

From all this it seems clear enough, at first glance, that the two separate letters of remission must have issued to different men, though for the same crime. Yet there remains a mystery. For in the letters to François des Loges, alias de Villon, although mention is made of his companions, Gilles, a priest, and the woman Ysabeau, and also of the companion of Chermoye, Master Jehan le Mardi, nothing is said of the presence on the scene of the fight of François de Montcorbier, although it is not probable that this scion or connection of a noble family of the Bourbonnais could have been overlooked. Moreover, granting him to have been a witness or an active participant in the affair, why should he have suffered alone and in silence the sentence of banishment? when he knew well enough that the guilt rested wholly or in large part upon another, according to the petition of François des Loges (de Villon) as set forth in the letters of remission accorded to him. Why, further, should the trial court have failed or refused altogether to take any account of the report of the barber Fouquet, who had dressed the wounded lip of des Loges and had had from him, for the purpose of making a report, as the law required, the name of Michel Mouton? Are we to suppose that there existed between two young men, one a student at the University, a friendship so close, so proven, and so enduring and long-suffering that either was willing to bear for the other the consequences of an accusation of murder? Or, at least, that de Montcorbier was willing to bear that burden for des Loges? I say 'one a student at the University.' For, despite La Croix' statement that Villon was a simple student there, no such name appears upon the records. Nor does the name of François des Loges appear there. Are we to suppose that de Montcorbier was so little known in Paris that the description given by Fouquet could have been accepted by a court of competent jurisdiction as identifying him beyond doubt? Yet nowhere in the Testaments of Villon, among all the names sown so thickly among them, do we come even once upon the name of François de Montcorbier, nor upon one solitary expression of friendship for such a personage, nor one of gratitude for the sacrifice made by such a friend. No writer in history has more freely poured forth his joys and woes and bared to the world the actions of those who caused them, than has Villon. Is it likely—is it possible—that he could or would have remained silent upon a matter that had touched him so nearly as this, and upon such a friendship? He had not, apparently, many friendly actions to record. Why should he have overlooked this? Interesting as M. La Croix' arguments are, and however ingeniously founded, I must fail to agree with him, offering in lieu thereof an argument that seems to me more plausible, however grounded, in part, upon mere conjecture.

"I have been poor from my youth," says Villon in Octave XXXV of the Great Testament, "of poor and humble lineage." And he goes on to confess that his father was never rich, nor was that father's grandfather, called Erace (this last name being probably a corruption of Horace). La Croix, Colletet and others have thought that this confession of poverty precludes the possibility of the poet's having been connected with the landed family of the de Montcorbiers, although why there should not have been poor sprigs of that tree, or illegitimate offshoots, does not appear. If it should be developed that there had lived, at a period approximately one hundred years before Villon's time, a Horace or Erace de Montcorbier, the discovery of this would go far to substantiate the soundness of the reasoning herein advanced. Why does Villon give us his great-grandfather's name? Is it not to apprise us of an ancestry to which he was, perhaps, forbidden to lay claim? And if he really was a son of the people, is it likely that he would have been aware of the name of an ancestor so remote as a paternal great-grandfather?

It is stated positively in the variant, discovered by Claude Fauchet, of the Quatrain Villon Made

When Condemned to Die (see note under caption of Divers Poems): "I am François . . . named Corbüeil in my surname, native of Auvers, near Pontoise, and of the commons named Villon." Lacroix, taking issue with Colletet, argues that the poet here says that he was called Villon *par le commun* (by the common voice), that is, by all the world, and that he had received the surname of Corbüeil, which is to say, *oeil louche* (squint-eye). And he goes on to hold that it is clear that Corbüeil is the *surname* rather than the *real* or *family* name of the poet. It seems to me that such argument is ridiculous. Why should the writer expressly give us his common name or nickname as Villon, by which he was known to all the world, and, at the same time, dignify another nickname, Squint-eye, as a surname or family name? In Villon's day the word *seurnom* (surname) meant family name, as it does today, and not a mere nickname imposed by the world. The truth is, that Corbüeil is either a corruption that has occurred somewhere in the manuscripts, or someone has deliberately played upon such words as *corbel*, *corbeau* (crow, raven), *corbeille* (basket), *corbillard* (hearse), etc. For the authenticity of this variant of Villon's jesting epitaph has been often and seriously called in question. It is from a manuscript in the Library of Stockholm. Moreover, M. Longnon has thought that the almost illegible first two verses should be read thus:

Je suis François, dont il me poise,
Nommé Corbeil en mon seurnom.

which I render:

I am Francis, hung in the balance,
Named Corbeil in my surname.

Corbeil is the name of an old village near Paris, and to have borne that name would have constituted as clear a title to gentility as de Villon or de Montcorbier evidence. It will be noted, also, that whereas Villon calls himself a son of Paris and gives evidence in his rhymes of using the Parisian accent and pronunciation (see the note governing Octave XVI, L.T), this variant changes the *Né de Paris emprès Pontoise* (Born of Paris, near Pontoise) to read, *Natif d'Auvers, emprès Pontoise* (native of Auvers, near Pontoise). Now Auvers was a village near Pontoise in the *Vexin Français*, and, as M. Campaux points out, to have been born at Auvers would scarcely have entitled one to call oneself a Parisian. Again, if the real name of the poet were Montcorbier, granting that he composed this octave, why should he have shortened it? Why should he have corrupted it? And if Villon actually wrote the octave and his real name were not de Montcorbier, then he must have wished it to be thought that such was his name. But then would he not have been at pains to spell it correctly and to have written it in full? I conclude that whosoever composed this variant on Villon's quatrain must have been well aware that the poet claimed the de Montcorbiers as his kindred, and that he mocked the claim, as we have seen, by playing a portion of the name against words that were scarcely complimentary in meaning or acceptation.

But all this—does it not, in fact, fortify a suspicion that the poet's claim to kinship with the de Montcorbiers was well grounded? Consider the fact, developed by Longnon, that François de Montcorbier was among the scholars summoned, first for the degree of licentiate, then for that of master of arts, in 1452, whereas no such names as those of des Loges, de Villon or Villon appear upon the records of the University. Yet it seems to be incontestible that Villon was, in reality, a student there. The de Montcorbiers were a noble family of the Bourbonnais; and in later life (see the Ballade of His Request to the Duke of Bourbon) Villon did not hesitate to ask a loan from a noble who might well have been his feudal overlord. Let us assume, for the moment at least, that François de Montcorbier, Licentiate and Master of Arts, was veritably the man who wrote the poems known as Villon's.

Near the season of Christmas, in 1456 (1457, N. S.), we find Villon sitting down to compose what we call the Little Testament. As he writes he tells us, that because he must break from the hard imprisonment of an unfortunate love, he is about to quit Paris and will go to Angers. Now we know from Guy Tabarie's confession when questioned regarding the robbery at the College of Navarre (see Appendix), that Villon had gone to Angers, following the robbery, some days before Christmas, 1456 (1457) to reside with an uncle and to concert plans for another robbery at that place. This uncle is thought to have lived at Saint Maixent, a little village in Poitou. Some commentators have held that Villon's journey was in order to escape the consequences of an affront to a *fille de joie*, but they are of those who believe that the opening stanzas of the Little Testament carry a real lament for love. Others have apparently confused dates, and hold that the journey to Angers was consequent upon the murder of Chermoye. But that murder had been committed on June 5 of what Villon knew as 1454, since the crime was pardoned in January of the following year, 1455 (1456, N. S.). In the Christmas season of 1454 he was a fugitive from Paris; by Christmas of 1456 he had been pardoned. In the interval he had become implicated in the robbery of the College of Navarre, although the crime had not yet been attributed to him.

Why, now, does he, at the very outset of the Little Testament, and thereafter always, through all his poems (except in the envoi to the New Ballade of the Jargon. See note on that poem), call himself Villon, rather than Montcorbier or de Montcorbier? De Montcorbier he had been upon the books of the University where, in 1452, he had taken his degrees. Is it not plausible that consequent upon the disgrace brought upon them by the murder of Chermoye, the de Montcorbiers had broken for ever with this wild student, or this illegitimate member of the family, who had borne their name by courtesy, perhaps, and had been put to school that a bastard de Montcorbier might not reflect more than was inevitable of the gutter upon their 'scutcheon? Wounded by Chermoye, why does the slayer give to Fouquet the fictitious name of Michel Mouton? Since he intended not to abide the issue of a trial for the crime, there was nothing to be gained by this lie, insofar as the officers of justice were concerned. Chermoye and the witnesses knew his true name well enough, and the latter would not have hesitated to reveal it under torture. No, but there was the name of a noble family to conceal; there was the code to observe, as even the bastards of a race observe such codes; there was the necessity of keeping from the low gossip of Fouquet and his fellows the knowledge that a de Montcorbier was wanted by the officers to answer for a common brawl; there was, further, the necessity, perhaps, of shielding a woman's honor. Thus, instantly, instinctively, unreasoningly, was given the silly name of Michel Mouton (Michael Mutton). Of course the officers of the king's justice were not befooled. There is no mention of François de Montcorbier, *alias de Villon.* There is no mention at all of Michel Mouton. All the extant documents in this cause referring to François de Montcorbier give that as the sole name of the man accused and convicted.

Seven months pass away, and the death of an obsecure priest named Chermoye is forgotten. But the stigma upon an honorable name has not been forgotten. Need we here long concern ourselves with asking the means taken by the de Montcorbiers to efface that stain? Surely no great pressure of influence need have been brought to bear to convince the King and his Council that a pardon could issue quietly and without apparent perversion of justice. That such a pardon did issue, dated as from Paris, we already know, which pardon was signed in the King's name, since the King was at that moment wintering in Bourbonnais. So far, so good. De Montcorbier had been tried, and, although not present to face his accusers, found guilty and sentenced. Now, in the letters of remission, it is set forth that he had not been accused by the victim—set forth, moreover, that the victim had desired that no action be taken against him, and had himself pardoned him. Are we not to suppose that upon review the King and the Council are of the opinion that an injustice has been done? Thus was the honor of the de Montcorbiers cleared. But if to clear that honor of stain was the motive of the de Montcorbiers, rather than, primarily, to get a member of the family out of trouble, what would they nevertheless have exacted from François de Montcorbier as the price of obtaining a pardon for him? We can only suppose that it was his renunciation of all claim to a right to the use of that family's name in future. And this demand would have been the more likely to have been made and the more readily acceded to had Villon been either the illegitimate child of a de Montcorbier or the son of an illegitimate child. I will later discuss the matter of Villon's statement that he was of poor and humble race, with relation to the subject of certain mental characteristics acquired from his parents: meanwhile let it not be forgotten that in Octave XXIII of the Great Testament, dropping for the moment his pose of being mean of origin, he says unequivocally that his kindred, forgetting the natural ties of blood, have closed their doors upon him because he has no money in his purse. And it is from a time following the issuance of the first pardon, and prior to the composition of the Little Testament, that we first come upon the names des Loges, de Villon and Villon.

Here it may not be out of place to refer to what we know as the *Ballade Nouvelle* (The New Ballade) of the Jargon. This piece (see notes on the Jargon) has been more or less tentatively accepted by critics as veritably of our poet's workmanship. In the envoi thereof occurs the name Villon in an acrostic. In each of the verses of this envoi (one of which seems to have been lost) M. Vitu has discovered anagrams giving the names F. de Moncorbeulh (Montcorbier), des Loges and Villon. The date of the ballades in argot is authoritatively thought to be just prior to or just after the date of the Little Testament. If this poem is genuinely Villon's, the matter is settled. But it remains to show why he bore, in succession, the names de Montcorbier, des Loges, de Villon and Villon.

Preceding the Ballade of Envious Tongues, in Octave CXXX of the Great Testament, we find Villon leaving to Sire Jehan Perdryer nothing, and as much to François, "his second brother," saying that they two have aforetime aided him in like fashion. But he goes on to speak of this François Perdryer as having been his *compère* (crony, confederate, pal); and we know that Sire Jehan Perdryer (see note governing Oct. CXXX, G. T.) was *concièrge* (door- or gate-keeper or guard), in 1466-7, of the Hôtel des Loges in the forest of Saint Germain. It is not likely that Perdryer would have been given this post, which must have entailed some measure of responsibility and certainly demanded a degree of confidence upon the part of the man's employer, had he not, in past years, served that employer in such manner as to earn that confidence. Thus it is quite probable that the man was employed there as early as 1454 (1455, N. S.), although, perhaps, in some minor capacity. Granting this, and assuming that the close association between the brothers had always existed, it becomes logical to suppose, either that François Perdryer had likewise been employed about the Hôtel, or at least that he had often visited there. If this were true, then it is reasonable to argue that de Montcorbier, his pal, was also often there. Moreover, there existed a considerable friendship between the poet and Jehan Perdryer. Well, here is our young de Montcorbier suddenly deprived of his name at the very outset of his career. François de Montcorbier he had been yesterday, and to day he is only François—that and no more. In such a case, is it not natural that a young man's first concern would be to cast about for some title wherewith to supplant his loss? Perhaps the Hôtel was untenanted, save for a caretaker and a few servants. Perhaps our poet, with the Perdryers and other companions, held many a nocturnal revel there, sheltered from prying eyes in the deeps of the forest, which was a real forest in those days. Perhaps, having fled from

Paris, the slayer of Chermoye had lain hidden there. It is easy to concoct reasons, all of them plausible enough, why the name des Loges should have become fastened upon this nameless one, first in jest, mayhap, then, later from habit, half in jest, half in earnest. To the devil-may-care poet the title doubtless appealed as forcefully as any other would have done—at least at the first. Moreover, unless come by in some such manner, how did Villon acquire the name des Loges? No such name is entered upon the records of the University. And if François des Loges had been the real name of Villon, why did he drop it following the granting of his pardon? Why did he repeatedly thereafter sign his poems with the name Villon and never once with that of des Loges? We can only surmise something akin to what has already been surmised to account for the sudden disappearance of the name of François de Montcorbier. And the probabilities of such a thing happening twice, in precisely the same manner, to the same man, are as remote as that two different men could have been impelled or compelled, at about the same time, to abandon their rightful names, for one and the same cause. Further, we should be again involved in all the difficulties that stand in the way of a ready acceptance of the theory of La Croix and those of his school—why should either de Montcorbier or des Loges, both being present at the time and place of the murder of Chermoye, have maintained so strict a silence, each as to the actions of the other? etc. We are to suppose, then, that at some time after the commission of the crime on June 5, 1454, and prior to January, 1455, the man known to us as François Villon gave over the use of the name François de Montcorbier and adopted, more or less tentatively, that of François des Loges. There remains, however, the mystery of François de Villon, written as an alias into the second letters of remission.

It is needful to remember that Villon was at this time a young man, who, if he had most of the vices of his time and condition, had also, doutless, many of the virtues. In any event he must have had an engaging personality, probably, too, a not unpleasing exterior. Many women appear to have loved him in his life, even to the point of prostituting themselves for his keep and comfort; and we are not exempt, even today, from falling under spell of the charm of his humor. For some reason, at which we can only guess, he had come under the notice of one Guillaume de Villon, chaplain of the church of Saint Benoît, in 1431, that is, during the year in which the poet, by his own testimony, was born (Octs. I and XI, G. T.). Perhaps the worthy ecclesiastic had stood godfather to the child, or perhaps he had performed the ceremony of baptism;

for Villon says (Oct. VI, G. T.) that he had been baptised. Perhaps he was, in some degree, a relative by blood or marriage. Niceron and others have thought that Guillaume de Villon was an uncle of the poet, but they are of those who hold that Villon (or de Villon) was the true name of the singer, quite ignoring the fact that no such name appears upon the registers of the University where, if anywhere, it is likely that his true name would have been inscribed. Still others have guessed that the chaplain might have been employed to tutor the young student during his earlier years at school, which conjecture takes on the color of plausibility only if we grant behind the student some such means as the de Montcorbiers would have had. All that seems certain is that the good man had acquired a real affection for the youth and that the latter wished it to appear that this affection was in some sort reciprocated. He calls him his "more than father" (Oct. LXXVII, G. T.), and in the same stanza says "who to me has been sweeter than mother to her suckling child." Again, in Oct. IX, L. T., it is to Maistre Guillaume Villon that François leaves his fame *(bruit)*. But of all this, more later. De Villon is known to have been the proprietor of several houses in the vicinity of the church of Saint Benoît, and from the fact that the letters of remission state that des Loges was living (at the time of the killing of Chermoye) in the cloisters of Saint Benoît, one seems justified in supposing that he lived with his patron or foster father. Now, in the Double Ballade in the Great Testament, Villon refers to a former flame of his called Katherine de Vaucelles. (For variations on the spelling of this name see the note governing that ballade.) It has been established that this lady was either the sister or the niece of Pierre de Vaucelles, one of the four canons of the church of Saint Benoît and principal of the College of Navarre. It is easy enough to understand that he might have become acquainted with the girl through his friendship with de Villon, a colleague of her uncle or brother; or it is not improbable that he may first have attracted the attention of de Villon at the house of the de Vaucelles. In the meanwhile here is our François brought into perhaps daily contact with the young and, no doubt, charming Katherine, and that without a penny in his pocket or a name to call his own, save the equivocal one of des Loges. We know, from the stanzas immediately preceding the Ballade of Envious Tongues, that Villon had quarreled with the Perdryer brothers, since they gave evidence against his character at Bourges. Perhaps this quarrel occurred prior to the robbery of the College of Navarre in 1456 (1457, N. S.), and during the period of Villon's amity with Katherine. If so, the fact would have furnished him with one more reason for abandoning the use of the title of des Loges, since the very sound of the name would have recalled to his mind, not only the friends who were now become his enemies, but also the disgrace which, as a lover, he must have wished to keep as far as possible from the consciousness of his love. Why should he not have been glad to adopt the name of his patron, that patron being willing that he should, as we must suppose him to have been? But in the city of Paris, even in those days, not all of the poet's acquaintance could have become immediately aware of each of these changes of name. Even of those who no longer called him de Montcorbier there must have been many to continue calling him des Loges for some time after he had given out that he wished to be known as de Villon. Hence, in the second letters of remission, he is written down as François des Loges, alias de Villon.

But if Katherine de Vaucelles occupied his heart at this time, then upon some matter touching this lady may we not look for the cause of the quarrel with Chermoye? Men do not habitually pardon their slayers and desire that they be not prosecuted, except in cases that involve women. From time immemorial gentlemen, though they have quarreled and fought and died readily enough for a woman's favors, have not cared to drag her name into the scandal awakened by their brawling. It becomes probable that Chermoye, hate Villon (de Montcorbier) as he might, ostensibly pardoned his enemy and begged that no prosecution be instituted against him, because an investigation might compromise the woman's good name; and he preferred to die, leaving her in possession of his rival, than to risk that. Might not similar considerations have influenced young François de Montcorbier, also, when approached by his family to abandon the use of that name as the price of a full pardon which they could and would procure for him? That is to say, might not the issuance of the pardon have helped to quiet gossip concerning the fair Katherine?

Thus now, we begin to understand why two letters of remission were accorded. The first, dated from Paris, implies clearly, that upon reviewing the case, the King and the Council were convinced of the innocence of de Montcorbier, since, before his death, the victim, Chermoye, had willed and ordered that the slayer be allowed to go free—in short, the King and the Council preferred now to accept this expressed wish of the dying man as indirect yet conclusive evidence that de Montcorbier had not dealt him his death blow. This pardon granted, and the honor of the de Montcorbiers vindicated, it became necessary to anticipate adverse criticism and to prepare in advance the means of quieting it. In other words, they sought a scapegrace—one who could be pardoned, considering the circumstances, with some show of justice. And here, ready to hand, was the brand new François des Loges, alias de Villon. This man could be readily identified by the witnesses as the actual murderer; his description fitted the description of the man reported by Fouquet; yet since an allegedly reasonable presumption of innocence of de Montcorbier had been entertained, upon review, Chermoye having died without accusing anyone, the same presumption of innocence could be extended to embrace des Loges, alias de Villon, the more so as, at the time of the brawl, he had not borne either of those names. It is true that this would presuppose the silence or disappearance of the witnesses, but that detail had doubtless been well attended to by those interested in securing the pardon. In the second letters of remission we find no attempt to excuse the crime because the victim's dying word had been one of forgiveness; on the other hand, pardon is granted boldly and baldly, in consideration of certain representations and promises therein set forth as having been made by the suppliant, and the civil authority is directed to consider itself satisfied. De Montcorbier is pardoned, in the King's name, by letters dated from Paris; des Loges (de Villon) by letters signed by the King at Saint Pourçain. Later the two documents could be and were, quietly filed away in the same registry.

I have dwelt at some length upon this matter of Villon's name because it seems to me that without some such conclusion as that arrived at the poems of François Villon cannot be properly understood and appreciated. Of the many conflicting theories held and advanced by as many critics, each of them appears to have been formulated upon a basis of one, or, at most, a few of the facts, regardless of violence done to other facts, even, in some cases, of plain common sense. I do not say that my own conclusions are in every case deduced from known facts. On the contrary, I stated at the outset that some of them must rest upon mere conjecture. But I have not resorted to conjecture where anything was known; and I do not believe that my opinions as written do violence to anything that is known or critically held to be true. At the same time they do offer plausible reasons and explanations for and of much that cannot be proved.

As to the last change in the poet's name, that of the dropping of the "de" and becoming plain Villon, it seems to me to be accounted for in the estrangement that must have grown between his patron and himself following the robbery of the College of Navarre. For Octave IX of the Little Testament is probably satirical. The "fame" of Villon at the time of its composition was that of a criminal. What he leaves is nothing of which the canon might be proud. Moreover, the very name of Villon is itself equivocal. Guillaume de Villon is thought by scholars to have derived his name from the village of Villon near Tonnerre. But other scholars have shown that *villon*, *villonnie*, or *willonnie* are assimilable to the old word *guille*, meaning *tromperie* (deception, fraud, guile, etc.). Hence the poet, in saying of de Villon that the honor of his name makes his, François', tents and pennons famous, has said, in effect, that de Villon's name is most appropriate for him, the cheat and thief, to bear. Of course this slur is so wittily worded as to appear to be complimentary.

Here it may be pointed out, that M. Campaux and others have reasoned: Villon's familiarity with the methods and manners of tanners and with the esoteric meanings of words peculiar to that trade lends color to a suspicion that, in his youth, he may have gained his living as a tanner. And they point to Ballade V and the New Ballade of the Jargon and to Oct. CIII of the Great Testament (in which last Villon says *Moy qui suis bon miège*—"I, who am a good tanner")—in support of their contention. As a matter of fact, however, Villon's residence in or near the cloisters of Saint Benoît, in the immediate vicinity of which many tanneries were located (see note on the word *floterie*, Ballade V of the Jargon), would have given him ample opportunity to acquire whatever knowledge he displays. Nay, it is even possible that he may have been employed as a clerk (for a short time) by some master tanner. But to say that a knowledge of tanners' language makes a tanner of Villon is equivalent to saying that a like knowledge of the jargon of philosophers makes a philosopher of him.

And here, too, it is not out of place to remark that this man, who has written himself down as of poor and humble race, cannot quite escape the influence of the dead hand. Had he really been a child of the people, it is not likely that he would have been at pains to say, in stanzas of difficult rhyme, that he was of mean birth. The fact would probably not have presented itself to him as being in any sense necessary to his complaint against poverty: he would have expected the world to take that much for granted. But he very evidently wishes to hurt the pride of someone, perhaps the de Montcorbiers', perhaps that of his mother. We will examine his attitude toward his mother later on. But because he has cut away or has been cut away from gentility, he informs us that he has never possessed any claim to it, and, out of the bitterness of his heart, he mocks even the small gentility of the man that has been kind to him.

Becoming more and more the criminal and the outcast, avoided by respectable persons, casting his lot deeper and deeper with those of the underworld, and growing daily more shamelessly and helplessly involved with all officers appointed to uphold and to apply the laws, it is not unlikely that what little of native decency and honesty remained alive in the man came rapidly to scorn this pitiful clinging to the shreds of an artificial title to gentle birth and breeding. Gentle blood he possessed, it is more than likely, for the ragtag and bobtail people of the world do not commonly produce such artists as he was (except, occasionally, in painting, the most inarticulate of the arts). But by so much as he strove, consciously or unconsciously, to forget his origin and the rank to which the expectations of youth had directed his ambition, by so much the suppression of his desire found vent in mockery of all that he had once held worth while. One pictures him cutting out with an angry stroke of the pen that offending "de" which he had written before Villon. If he was to live in the gutter, he would divest himself of every rag of his own respectability while he wallowed; but he would not cease to strive to ruin, with satire and invective, the respectability of those he hated. Had it been otherwise, had he had less cause to feel and to need expression for emotion, he would probably be unknown to us of today. For, say what one will, all poetry worthy of the name is an attempt at an escape. It is a cry in the night, and almost always it is a cry of despair.

II

It has been the general belief that because Villon wrote in the unpolished cadences of the tavern and the street, dealing with events that happened and with people that moved around him, rather than in the elegant manners of the court, on themes of conventionally acceptable poetic merit—it has been generally believed that he was, primarily, a poet of the people, as Robert Burns may be said to have been. Yet it is impossible to think of Villon as having written anything similar to "The Cotter's Saturday Night." Where, in all his lines, do we come upon a single expression of heartfelt sympathy for the lowly of the earth? Lines there are in plenty devoted to bewailing his own hard lot; lines there are denouncing the insolence or the oppression of the great; and lines in which he enunciates his realization that all men must meet, at last, in the sorry brotherhood of the dead. But for all this I can find nowhere a single sentiment of real democratic feeling. Villon wrote of the people because he hated and abhorred the people, just as he wrote of Thibaut d'Aussigny and the brothers Perdryer and other individuals who were his enemies. Turn to the Ballade of Counter-Blast to Franc-Gontier for an open disavowal of any sympathy or respect for those who toil with their hands. "There is no treasure but to live at ease." Yet it is not in this frank and scornful ballade that we find the most striking evidence of his innately proud and savage ego—the ego of the born aristocrat—but in the lines and stanzas wherein, ostensibly taking the people for his allies, he vents his spleen of envy against the rich. If it should be held that in Octave XXX of the Great Testament he does, for a moment, evince a feeling of true compassion for the unfortunate ones who, "all nude," stare wistfully at the loaves in some baker's window and beg for pennies, having failed to become "great lords and masters," as some of their fellows have become, a closer scrutiny reveals that what moves Villon to write of them is not compassion, nor is it sympathy, but a vast and endless bewilderment before this ever-varying mystery of life, second only in fascination to the unchanging mystery of death. "Behold," he cries, "how different is the state between them!" It does not touch Villon nearly that one man begs while another "washes down roast meats with good wine." What does touch Villon is that there should be room in the world for so great a contrast. "There we were," he says in effect, "all of us gracious gallants, young together, pleasant and gay. There was not much to choose between us then. And now—some of them are dead, and there's nothing more to be said of those poor men for ever; others—God save us!—are become masters and great lords; others, still, have nothing. What sort of world is this? And what is the meaning of it all?" And then, because of the impenetrable mystery of being, he flees into the sanctuary of his conventional religion with his "God save the rest of us!" In Octave XXXI it is evident that the rich, "living in peace and at their ease," excite not his pity, as they excited Franc-Gontier's, but his envy. His prayer for patience to endure poverty is not sincere, but a hypocritical assumption of a meekness really inimical to his nature. What he means is: "O God, thou hast given enough to the rich: give thou now something unto me also!" All this becomes the more evident in the succeeding stanza, wherein he recites, with an envy he is at no pains to conceal, a long list of the various dishes that can be enjoyed by the rich whenever they choose to eat of them. The rich do not resemble poor masons, he says, who procure their food with toil and pain and must each fill up his own glass with wine, since it will never be filled for him. But, in saying this, Villon does not even suggest that he thinks it good to be a poor mason; he does not in any sense praise the "honest toil" of the poor, nor does he in the slightest compare it with the "unearned increment" of the great; nothing in his lines can be construed to mean anything except that, poor like a mason, he is envious of the rich and would like to share their lot. If he does not mean just that, and if he does not say just that, by implication, then it must be held that Villon is philosopher enough to exclaim with that other philosopher, "Pain, thou art not an evil!" And the Counter-Blast to Franc-Gontier is proof enough of how silly he thought that sentiment. Only once, in all his poems, does he, and as it were in a moment of expansive weakness, cry out against the tyranny and mismanagement of a world that callously inflicts suffering upon the helpless. This is in Octave XXX of the Little Testament, and even then he appears to have roused to his protest not so much out of pity for the weak as out of contempt for the needless brutality of the strong. Had he been truly moved by pity, he would have inveighed against the oppression of which he speaks; since it is scorn that moves him, he satirically denounces the evils that the weak are heirs to. And, returning to the theme in Octave CLXIII of the Great Testament, he seems to have employed it for no broader purpose than to fling a careless jest at the Mendicant Orders of friars. It is by no means the attitude of Jesus of Nazareth; it is, rather, that of the educated Roman, Pontius Pilate. And indeed he sums up his discussion of poverty in the very words of

Pilate, saying that he hopes all men will be satisfied with what he has had to say of them, and adding: "What I have written, I have written." In all literature there is no more crushing expression of disdain and scorn.

In Octave XVI of the Great Testament he does, it is true, declare that he would gladly sacrifice his life for the public good, and this is often cited in attempts to uphold a theory of Villon's democratic spirit. Yet it is nothing of the sort. No aristocrat of sense but would do the same thing, since only by promoting the public good can individual good be gained. Even a Coriolanus held this view of economics. It is part of the code of a gentleman. When an aristocrat becomes so aloof from the world that he is no longer interested in the common welfare of man, he becomes a monster, like Nero, or a hermit, like Lancelot, or, given the necessary pathological twist in his psyche, a preacher, like Paul of Tarsus. But Villon's stanza lies between stanzas devoted entirely to cavillings against the poet's own hard lot. He has just concluded a confession of having sinned much and variously, and has remarked that there were extenuating circumstances sufficient to cause a just God to forgive him his trespasses. He proceeds to relate the anecdote of the pirate before Alexander, and to draw from this the immediate conclusion that had he been likewise befriended by his prince his life had been a happier and more virtuous one. Suddenly, then, to have cried, from the midst of his whining, that he too could be self-sacrificing, should it be demanded of him, was no more than an attempt to bolster up a position he must instinctively have felt to be growing untenable. Where is the beggar that does not, at need, protest himself to be not all the scoundrel and the scum? And by so much as he is the more ignorant and the more worthless, by so much the deeper will be his conviction of the justice of his protestation. That Villon did not, in his heart of hearts, believe in his own worthiness as a man, is attested by the entire tone of his Testaments, and especially by that mockery of himself which pervades the closing stanzas of the Great. "A poor small scholar," he calls himself in the epitaph comprising Octave CLXV; and in the famous quatrain made when he was condemned to hang the laughter of self-scorn is evident enough. But it must not be forgotten, that whatever Villon thought of himself and said of himself as man and subject, the opinion he held of the man he might have been was a very different thing.

But it is in the whole tenor of his Testaments that we find the most conclusive proof of his innate dislike of and contempt for the masses of mankind. Thrown daily in contact with them, eating their bread and salt, seducing their women, breathing the air of their bedrooms, warming himself at their fires, hearing their gossip, cheating and being cheated, he has had nothing whatsoever to record of them save something that is discreditable to individuals. For Bishop Thibaut d'Aussigny, a man who probably performed no more than his sworn duty upon the body of Villon, the poet has no single word save one of cursing or of ridicule. It is improbable, that in all his life he witnessed not one act of disinterested self-sacrifice, not one deed of heroism, not one instance of pure religious devotion, filial piety or conjugal affection. Yet where has he recorded them? When he speaks of such virtues it is to note them down as having been possessed by persons at that time dead. Certain acquaintances of his own had made a brave show in their youth, he says, but here he merely generalizes, and then only for the purpose of drawing a sharp and dramatic contrast. He makes a tender little rondeau upon the loss by one Ythier of an unnamed love, but it is not to express any passion of his own, certainly not to express any grief of his. One retains a feeling that the verses have been made merely as a literary exercise, just as one can scarcely escape feeling that the Ballade for a Newly Married Gentleman is not Villon's own poem (see note on it). And in the Ballade Made at the Request of His Mother Villon was so little influenced by a desire to celebrate his mother's devotion that he deliberately sacrificed the possible perfection of beauty in his envoi to an urge to write into it his own name in an acrostic—a feat which never has failed to cripple a poet's lines, as none that has ever attempted it will deny. He did as much in the Ballade of Fat Margot, though I do not find that anyone else has made a note of this.

Does he, then, in Octaves XLIII, XLIV and XLV of the Great Testament, appear to voice a feeling of true compassion for men grown old, who are pushed brutally to the wall by the young and strong and driven sometimes to suicide, oftener to despair? But these stanzas grow naturally out of Villon's contemplation of death, and in them he seeks, again, no more than an opportunity to marvel at the endlessly varying contrasts of life. There is no single tear for the old: there is only a wonderment that men once young are come to be so much like mowing apes. Nor does he put into the mouth of La Belle Heaulmière the unforgettable stanzas of her poignant lament for the sake of any sympathy with or affection for such poor old women come now to evil age. But it is to express Villon's dismay, it is to voice Villon's horror, it is to record Villon's rebellion against the inescapable breaking down of all that is beautiful in life—it is for these that he has made here a poem which will surely live so long as the language lasts.

Finally, in Octave CLII, G. T., if he does, for a moment, speak of civic virtue in men, let us remember that he refers only to men dead; and he closes his stanza with an invocation to God and the good Saint Dominick to forgive such men their sins. But Dominick is generally, though erroneously, regarded as the founder of the Inquisition; at any rate he was a great persecutor of heretics. So, then, Villon is satirical here also, and leaves to the tender mercies of such a saint the very men of civic virtue that he has apparently been lauding. It is heresy, to the sneering Villon, to abstain from peculation.

Thus, after examination, we have come upon no single utterance of this poet that has left us with the slightest evidence for a belief in his spiritual kinship with the common people living around him. On the contrary, there is abundant basis for belief that he was always out of key with them. He says, again and again, that poverty is no fit condition for a man like himself; he repeatedly emphasizes his longing for the flesh-pots of the world; he adjures the rich, in no uncertain terms, to be generous in giving alms and aid to the poor—an adjuration no self-respecting man of the people would be guilty of voicing; he carelessly patronizes the merry companions with whom he has associated and among whom he must have been a veritable leader (witness the evidence of the Free Feeds, not written by himself); he fawns upon the great and powerful, it is true, but it is always such fawning as a man of their own blood would use; and finally, having no single thing of material value to leave to any man, he has cast his greatest efforts into the shape of poetical testaments wherein he may leave, like a lavish lord, his malice, his scorn, his heartache, and his endless laughter to all the world.

Surely such a character could not have lived in the Middle Ages had its antecedents been always those of people accustomed, from the cradle to the grave, to poverty, to submission and to utter toil. For it must be remembered that no movement of rebellion upon the part of the people has ever originated among the masses. Always discontent has flamed into action first in the hearts of demagogues who, like Villon, were born to a knowledge and an heritage of better things. Not poetry alone, but every thing of positive and enduring value in human life is and has ever been the result of a desire to escape from something unendurable. Pent in the sunlight by walls of impenetrable darkness, we create an infinity of ghosts and gods, "peopling Heaven with poor damned men," searching the atoms and the universes for an opening, however hopeless we remain of attaining it, in an unceasing effort to escape from what presents itself to us as a prison wherein we must inevitably swiftly die. Hunger and boredom, these two conflicting impulses, have given to us all that we know or understand of civilization. They gave to Villon the power to rise above the condition of life into which he had been thrust, and to place himself upon a plane of equality with the great ones whom he dared not openly curse or mock. François de Montcorbier came thus into his own again.

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All that we know of the loves of Villon we have had to glean from his verses. He begins his Little Testament with a statement that he is about to quit Paris and go to reside at Angers, alleging as the reason therefor the deceit of a certain "She" whom he does not name. Now the complaint herein embodied does not ring quite true. In the first place, it is couched in the conventional language and form of almost all the poetry of that day—a convention that dated from the times of the troubadours. It is like the equally conventional and meaningless descriptions of May mornings with which Chaucer and his fellows used to open their metrical romances. This excuse of a "She" (for it is certainly nothing more than an excuse) begins abruptly and ends abruptly. Thereafter nothing is said of the woman, not even at the close of the Testament. It is as if Villon, being lazy-minded, had used this conventional opening, for want of another, but without gusto and without any exercise of imagination, and had been glad to find it completed and himself at liberty to say what he really wished to say. The passage is, in fact, very badly done, Octave IV, particularly, being a mere jumble of mixed figures. We know, indeed, from the testimony of Guy Tabarie, that Villon had left Paris at about this time to go to Angers, there to prepare the way for the robbery of a certain priest who was reputed to have amassed a small treasure. But even without this evidence of the record, he should be naïve indeed who could credit Villon with any real sorrow for the sake of love. Of course it is not to be thought improbable that he may have been, at that very moment, in the throes of a lover's agony. What man of lively imagination and decent health is long apart from that? My point is, that he was not sufficiently the lover, or the injured lover, to care to write convincingly, or beautifully, or poignantly about his sexual diversions. He dismisses women with a seeming shrug and passes on to other and, doubtless, more important matters. But the passage has afforded him opportunity to say that he is going from Paris to Angers; it would be understood by the only ones he knew would read his verses; and if others did read them, by any chance, it served to dramatize the manner of his going and his exile. This done, all the rest of the Little Testament is concerned with legacies to various men, save for a few fleeting glimpses, always malicious, at as many women.

Thus, in Octave XIII, by reference to a "cow," he probably indicates the mistress or wife of Jehan Trouvé, the butcher, to which latter he leaves *ung tachon* (a sort of whip or lash) to keep the flies away from her, adding that if anyone should steal this "cow" and hang her about his neck, refusing to return her, the thief should be strangled in a good halter. Now it must be an innocent mind indeed that will hold Villon's malediction upon such a thief to have been prompted by any consideration of justice. He does not wish the "cow" returned because it is right and proper and just that she should be returned to her owner, but because Jehan Trouvé, who was the sort of butcher to sell fly-blown beef, was, in Villon's malicious humor, the sort of owner this "cow" should have. Perhaps Villon had not liked his taste of the lady's favors; perhaps, even, he had been refused her favors. The incident lingers only long enough in his memory to recall the atrocious taste in headgear of that little Jehanneton de Millières, the mistress of Robert Vallée. Another mention of a woman does not occur until we come to Octave XXIX, wherein he leaves to jailbirds the favors of their jaileress. Even a superficial reflection here convinces us that this jaileress was so old or so ugly that her favors were more to be fought against than fought for. Villon may have known of this from sad experience. He certainly was not above trying thus to purchase freedom, or at least some prison comfort. In Octave XXXII he sneers at certain religious orders, male and female, being concerned here with sex only sufficiently to cause him to remark, in passing, that monks have a habit of "riding" our female neighbors. And that is all. He has utterly forgotten the literary heartbreak with which he set out to enlist our sympathy. He has said what he had to say and he is done, though he remains sufficiently the poseur to close upon a note of lamentation for his poverty.

But of the sexual content of the Great Testament there is more to be said. And the keynote to the whole of it seems to be struck in Octaves XXIV and XXV, in which stanzas occur the first references to the love of woman. In the first of these Villon vehemently disclaims having wasted his substance for wine or lecherously. "Nor for much love I'm indigent." Of course he had had nothing to waste. And if he had had, he probably would have wasted it for wine and women. But let this pass. In the second he remarks that it is nevertheless true that he has loved before and gladly would love again. The utter naïveté of this last confession cannot be doubted. What man of the world has not loved?

What man of the world would not love more? Here is no sentimental mooning over dead and gone romance. The heart of Villon had hammered hard in his breast for the glances and caresses of many a casual light-o'-love, but whatsoever sorrow it may have experienced in the aftermath of such affairs, it had not been deeply hurt. Worldling of the world was Villon, and man-about-town of Paris. He was not one to be sent, crushed and in despair, to his tablets to record the loss of the favors of some frail fair one, any more than he was the man to beget his "woeful ballad" to the eyebrow of some mistress with whom he was in feather. At the same time he was certainly not the man to forget nor to forgive such a beating as, in the Double Ballade, he says was meted out to him by the minions of Katherine de Vaucelles. "Lucky is he who has naught to do with women," he says, instancing his own harsh treatment at the hands of the fair Katherine as evidence of the truth of his contention. Thence he proceeds to recount the perfidity of a woman we must suppose to be La Vaucelles, saying that had she played fairly with him and told him beforehand of her intention, he would not have trusted her. Now who can believe that a man of Villon's sophistication could have penned such a passage in sober earnest? It is the hackneyed wail of rejected lovers everywhere; and Villon, often enough, must have laughed at such in-decent infantilism in his fellows, hearing them give utterance to it. Moreover, it is altogether probable that the woman had had him beaten because of his participation in the robbery of the College of Navarre, in 1456 (1457, N. S.), of which her brother or uncle was principal. It is not unlikely that Villon had used his very intimacy with Katherine to further this crime of himself and his companions. The entire stanza (Octave LV) reeks of mockery. And I read it to no purpose if I am wrong in finding within it, and in those immediately preceding and following it, a means of returning gracefully to the conventional pose which he had assumed in beginning the Little Testament.

He has been brought to some impasse of poverty, illness, or both, as result of the evil deeds he has done and for which he has been punished. All this is clear enough and not to be doubted. Moreover, he begins the Great Testament with a direct attack on Thibaut d'Aussigny as the author of his misfortunes. But now, following his long discussion of death and the loss of youth and beauty and all that makes life worth living, he comes, upon review of what he has written, to demand for himself something of the pity he has been evoking for others. Few men will pity the broken criminal for himself; but many men, and many women, too, will readily enough pity and in some sort forgive the criminal who claims to have been brought to his ruin by the infidelity of a woman he has loved in youth. Which of us, reading the "Three Musketeers," really used to condemn Athos for his drunkenness, his melancholia, his general worthlessness and, finally, for his crime of murder? Yet, from all that appeared in the story, the fault of Milady had consisted wholly in having overlooked being a virgin when the great Athos married her. But we were befooled by the trappings of romance, even as, to live in the world at all, we must continue to go all our lives looking at reality through mediums of illusion and belief. Villon knew this of men, and he used the knowledge to cause men to excuse in some sort what was really inexcusable. Nay, he is become today a great hero of romance, and many thousands, knowing nothing of Villon save what they have read in novels or heard spoken in stage plays, will not readily believe him to have been worse than a wastrel and a vagabond, erring, perhaps, and weak, yet a man capable of a strong true love and with an abiding patriotism for which his petty misdeeds should really be condoned. Women, especially, have liked to think of him as the character portrayed by the novelists and the playwriters, until God knows how many indigent and mawkish poets, aping this character, have been able to profit by such silly female ignorance. But I digress.

The truth is, that when Villon would write of the passion of love, he did not know how to write. If, for a moment, he does achieve something of real beauty and passion in the rondeau which he leaves to Ythier, we must remember that he is not here writing primarily of love, but of death. And only upon some theme of death could Villon write beautifully, or convincingly, or greatly. Through Octaves LVI, LVII and LVIII, he must be accused, either of a fatuous attempt to reproduce the confusion of a state of which he knew nothing, or (but less probably) a desire to burlesque the writings or oral maunderings of the generality of deserted lovers. But now, in Octaves LX and LXI, he does actually achieve some dignity of expression in announcing his determination to quit the pursuit of love. And how is this? Because renunciation of whatsoever kind savors somehow of death; and, as we know, whenever he had death for subject, Villon could be great.

With Octave LXXX he begins a deliberate mockery of what must have been that love affair which was the foremost in his memory. He first calls the woman "my dear Rose" *(ma chère Rose)*, and finally leaves her a ballade. But the name he uses in the acrostic let into the verses of the ballade is Marthe. What, then, are we to suppose from these facts? For my part, I see no reason to suppose anything beyond this: that Villon, having previously written the ballade of some former flame, whose name was Marthe, and having now a desire to preserve the piece or to enjoy a rest from the labor of composing his Testament, simply incorporated it into the latter at this point, regardless of the acrostic—which latter thing he may well have overlooked or quite forgotten. Be this as it may be, he thinks so little of his "dear Rose" that he is capable of leaving her a ballade containing another woman's name. More, he thinks so little of her that he specifically says (Octave LXXXII) that all this is done for the purpose of acquitting his heart more toward love than toward his love. The withdrawal of himself in favor of the heirs of Michaut, and the provision that the Bastard of the Barre is to greet the lady of the "twisted nose" *(nez tortu)* with the epithet of "dirty whore" *(orde paillarde)* are brutal enough, though they might be, perhaps should be, put down to jealousy or to desire for revenge. They were calculated to sting the woman in both the vanity of her personal appearance and her good name. There is a cold malice in them. Upon the whole, this "love poem," the only one certainly known to have been written by Villon for a woman, is such as few women would care to have composed for them.

Many have thought that the "Rose" is one with Katherine de Vaucelles, and it is true that a very plausible argument can be made to this effect upon the internal evidence of the verses. Such an argument serves no purpose, however, except the purpose of those determined to make of Villon the romantic lover, reduced to infamy and want by his hopeless devotion to a perfidious mistress. Those who seek to draw such a picture of the poet must, of necessity, abandon more material than they can make use of. Granting that the rondeau following the ballade was deliberately placed as it is for the purpose of contrasting Villon's estimate of Rose with that of a woman worth loving, that rondeau is itself immediately followed by two stanzas in which the writer very evidently refers to a place of assignation with one or more women of a far different sort (see the note governing Oct. LXXXVI, G. T.).

Thereafter we catch fleeting glimpses of various females, but of none that Villon sees fit to draw in more than vague outline, until we come down to the Ballade of Villon and Fat Margot and to the stanza preceding it. For the Ballade Given to a Newly Married Gentleman is either a poem from another hand or a satire of which no one has yet completely resolved the meaning (see note on it). It is no uncommon thing for a husband to employ some poetic friend to make for him some such sentimental verses to please a wife—say on the anniversary of their wedding. And that Villon had never known the lady we infer from the absence of realism in the lines. It is apparent that he was aware of nothing to her disadvantage—not that he must, of necessity, have striven to hurt, but because it was the nature of the man to vindicate himself regardless of consequences to others, a quality possessed by the great majority of us. He says that the blessing of such a love is not to be obtained by every man, and he does not marvel at that. Yet where, in such fashion, speaks the real Villon, the Villon of all the rest of the Great Testament? Perhaps he is romancing here; or he is writing to please; he is not being honest. Besides, as it chanced, the good lady had married Robert d'Estouteville, Provost of Paris, in 1446 (when Villon was but fifteen years of age), and had born him several children, according to Clément Marot. It is true that I have held Marot and his followers to be in error in concluding that a Robert d'Estouteville married Ambroise de Loré, that having been the name of one of the captains of the French forces under Joan of Arc (see the note governing that ballade). But this does not invalidate, but rather strengthens, my contention that Villon is not here writing out of an honest feeling of admiration.

In the Ballade of Fat Margot Villon plainly wallows. He seems bent on depicting himself as having sunk to the lowest levels of degradation and shame. Yet, pimp as he was to a prostitute with whom and on whom he lived, are we to believe that he was serious in his protestation that he actually loved the woman, *de propre nature?* It is by no means to be supposed that the thing was impossible in itself; it is only to be supposed that Villon was by now too far removed from ability to feel love of whatsoever sort. And, if more were needed, we have only to consult the third stanza of the ballade to learn what degree of joy he took from his relations with her.

After this there is no more said of love until we come to the Ballade to Serve as Conclusion; and here, it is apparent, Villon merely returns to his conventional pose. The ballade is too light in tone to have been written either by a dying man or a grief-stricken. He has not entirely overlooked returning to the former theme, as he did so overlook it in closing the Little Testament, but there is no zest in the labor. Plainly he has grown weary of the poem and is glad to have done with it. He doesn't care whether he writes convincingly or not.

Here it is well to point out that there is no small amount of evidence to indicate an entirely different meaning in most of Villon's stanzas devoted ostensibly to lamenting the loss of love. Thus, if one suppose that the "She" of whom he speaks in beginning the Little Testament, is really the personification of money, one finds that his statements are well enough in harmony with logic and fact. He must break from the hard imprisonment (in poverty) wherein he has lain so long. He will go to Angers, there to lay plans for a robbery to net himself and his companions "five or six hundred crowns." Moreover, since he has but recently helped to rob the College of Navarre, there is danger in remaining in Paris, etc. In the Ballade to Serve as Conclusion to the Great Testament it becomes plain that his flight "from here to Roussillon" is a flight from justice (see the Good Counsel and the Jargon), and not a flight from avenging minions of love. Again, in the Double Ballade of the Great Testament, speaking of having been beaten at the instance of Katherine de Vaucelles (thus it becomes more plausible to believe that he had used his friendship or intimacy with the lady to further his schemes for robbery), he says that one Noë, "who was there," received a third of the blows. But refer to the envoi to the New Ballade of the Jargon, in which the word Noe appears as the first word in the next to last line. Beginning as it does with an upper-case N, and because a preceding or succeeding line appears to have been lost, the Noe in question cannot surely be called either a noun or a verb. But the line makes no sense, unless some such word as *nage* (swims, rows) be substituted. Yet if we read Noë in lieu of noe, and as the antecedent of the *il recoit*, it becomes plausible that Villon here evidently speaks of this supposed rival as of another thief, who, beaten and deprived of clothing, has received too much of cold, green rushes, and manhandling by jailers. I do not care to dwell at length upon this matter. From other sources it has been developed that Villon was not the romantic lover so many earnest persons have thought him to have been. For the purpose of my argument it is sufficient to indicate this probable double meaning, leaving to others the complete resolving of it.

In the Divers Poems there is nothing at all upon the subject of love. In the shorter of the Attributed Poems there is little else. These latter were drawn, in greater part, from the *Jardin de Plaisance*, an anthology compiled, edited and published, toward the end of the fifteenth century, by Jean de Calais (see Oct. CLX, G. T.); and scarcely any two of Villon's modern editors are agreed on which, if any indeed, were really composed by the author of the Testaments. They bear but little of Villon's peculiar style, and that only insofar as such a style might have been imitated by lesser men; they are only either fatuous or lachrymose, when not downright brutal; and they constitute, altogether, a body of very poor verse. If some of them were actually written by Villon, it must have been in his green and salad days: certainly none of them was composed after 1456. And as having any real bearing on our investigation into Villon's character as a grown man, they may safely be disregarded. The longer pieces are now known to have been by hands other than Villon's.

Thus again, as we found it to be the case in considering Villon's feelings toward the generality of his fellow men, we find him to have entertained a deep-rooted scorn for and an abiding aversion to women. Drawn to consort with them by the imperative needs of his nature, sexual and mental, and, later, by the very hunger of his belly, he yet took no real joy from such intercourse and no real happiness or peace or pride from their society. On the other hand he says, over and over again, that women have wrought him only misfortune. He goes further and says that women have brought him near to death; but this, as we have seen, is probably nothing more than a poet's trope.

The truth seems to be, here as elsewhere, that we are to account for Villon's activities on the primitive bases of hunger (sexual desire) and boredom. But these bases, from which he took impulse, were subjective, not objective. His need of women was real and great, not because of a nature strongly sexed in the masculine gender, but because he had been driven to seek in gratification of the senses relief from the torture of an originally fine and sensitive understanding, from the vague and inharmonious visions of beauty that haunted him, impossible of attainment, and from the androgynous complexes of his thwarted and perverted soul. For, be assured, it is not for nothing that we come upon so many and varied references to the Bastard of the Barre. The trade of that worthy appears to have exercised a peculiar fascination over the imagination of the poet. Yet it was common enough in the France of the Hundred Years' War. I do not say, for there is no competent evidence of it, that Villon ever actually had sexual relations with this man; and certain it is that he did not hesitate to say his contempt for him. But something of what went on subconsciously in his mind is to be inferred and something of explanation of his attitude toward women is to be taken from consideration of these certain legacies. Moreover, Villon *seems*, in Octave CLXXII, to say he would prefer the favors of the young priest, Colas Tacot, even though it should cost him those of his mistress *(cornette)*.

It is entirely likely, that to the day of his death Villon nursed an illusion of which woman was the image. Had he been less thin-skinned in the beginning, he might have merged that illusion with reality, as it were, and, by such a compromise, arrived at a working hypothesis of love in life. As it was, each rebuff, each added bit of knowledge of life and sex, each acquisition of cynical disregard for the rights and interests of others, and each letting loose of the cruel and savage selfishness of the man—all these served but to build higher the walls which, in sheer self-protection, he erected between his outer consciousness and himself. For that illusion was himself. The power that was in him, that he felt and knew to be in him—some little of which is obvious to us in his extant poems—that power was de Montcorbier, and it had been defeated and driven to stand siege by the objective power of the wastrel Villon. We catch a glimpse of this defeated dream in the Ballade Given to a Newly Married Gentleman, but only a glimpse, and then only upon hypothesis that this ballade is not satirical. Villon the railer is not far away. He will not let de Montcorbier write with a free hand. Left to himself de Montcorbier might have written of a world in which beauty was a greater thing than boredom and hunger a lesser thing than love. And that would have brought down upon Villon the laughter of all Paris. Villon could not have endured that. The laughter of fools is, of all weapons, the one weapon for which a railer has no parry.

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All that are great of the poems of François Villon—great as poetry—are the following: Octave XXX of the Little Testament; Octaves XII to XLI, CXLVI and CXLVIII to CLI of the Great Testament, including the poems interspersed among these stanzas (except the Double Ballade); the Ballade of Ladies of Times Gone By; the Ballade of Lords of Times Gone By; the Ballade in Ancient French; the Ballade Made at the Request of His Mother; the Regrets of the Fair Adventuress; the Ballade of the Fair Adventuress to the Light-o'-Loves; the Ballade of Villon and Fat Margot; the Ballade of Good Doctrine to Those of Evil Life; and the Epitaph Made for Himself and His Companions in Form of a Ballade. By "great as poetry" let me be understood to mean great in the sense that Hamlet's soliloquy on death and Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale" are great poems. I realize that I am not here defining my qualification in any rational manner, but to do so would undoubtedly require more space than I have available and perhaps more ability than I possess. I must rely upon the reader's willingness to understand and to accept my statement, and pass on. Much of Villon (beside these stanzas and ballades) is clever, sprightly, satirical, original—what you will. Always he is interesting, except in those cases where time has so buried his meaning as to render it impossible to be longer seen by us. Seldom does he fail to present, and that with a few sharp strokes, a vivid outline of the picture that he himself has seen. But I think it will not be held that in these other pieces he has written verse entitled to be called great.

Now, all of the poems and passages that I have listed deal, directly or indirectly, with some theme of death. Nor has it ever been disputed, I think, that Villon is admittedly great only when dealing with some theme of death. The question then arises: Why is this?

We have already seen that he could write only in mediocre fashion upon the subject of love—that subject on which more good poetry has perhaps been written than any other. We have also seen that Villon knew but little of love, properly so called, except as he had gained a vicarious knowledge of it from his neighbors. But this ignorance need not have debarred him from producing good or even great erotic verse. There is reason to think that Poe, also, was quite incapable of feeling anything approaching a real physical passion for a woman, yet Poe could indite such exquisite lyrics as "To Helen" and "Annabelle Lee." Why, then, could not Villon?

The answer appears to be: that to Villon's understanding love presented itself as something akin to poverty—as a yielding, as a renunciation, as a thing to be feared, as death in life. To love well, whether sexually or under the guise of friendship, implies that one give more than one expects to receive. This ne'er-do-well had nothing of goods nor of gold to give for love: he had only his heart. And the heart of Villon was all that was his to keep. He had lost name, family, friends, respectability, prospects and ambition. Women are rapacious; women are impitiable. Had he given to any woman the power to find out that secret soul of his—power that must inevitably carry with it the ability to destroy—what would he have had left in all the world? It is not that he might not have emerged a better man from such an ordeal; it is that human nature shrinks instinctively from change of whatsoever sort. The inertia of a fixed belief (when the holder resists objective analysis and defense of such belief) is a very difficult thing to overcome, and men habitually expend more energy in resisting change than they would have to use in a ready acceptance of the new conditions change imposes. A familiar example is, that intelligent persons will endure the agony of toothache in preference to the small pain of a dental operation. To love meant then, in Villon's subconscious reasoning, to run such risk of robbery and of pain as he could not afford; and this notion took shape, when he wrote upon the subject, in the rather fatuous verses he has left us. In bringing this fear of robbery into the theatre of objective consciousness, he himself had to mask it under the guise of worldly wisdom in order to apologize to his man-hood and to his reason, lest they mock his own infantilism; and during the process of that apology he gained the sophisticated, while losing the outlook of the natural, man. Doubtless he went farther than that and persuaded himself that his continence of heart really indicated a superiority over his fellows, since they, with negligible exceptions, yielded readily enough to the seductions of the other sex—or to their own craving for a woman's care and comfort. Further, the essence of aristocracy is isolation. But aristocracy is an artificial condition, invented by intelligence; and the fact remains that such a continence is unnatural in man, save as it is the result of fear, expressed or hidden.

But if it had become impossible for Villon to write well of love in life, he was not at all inhibited from writing well of love in death. To sing of a love lost is to sing of a beauty lost; to sing of a beauty lost is to sing of life lost; and to sing of life lost was, to Villon, to sing of what he had already experienced in his soul. He that had deliberately defeated and driven into hopeless exile that part of his nature which he knew to have been alone worthy to live—he could sing now, of all that it was, all that it might have been, and all that it meant to be, only in strains of heartbreak and despair. For the banished part of him had been the real man: what remained was the pimp of Fat Margot, Jehanneton and the rest. Thus we find that the real love poems of this old Parisian singer are those masked by the shroud. And whether it be Thais or Echo, Ythier's mistress or La Belle Heaulmière, it is all one. He is for ever singing the passing of that dream of beauty which was his soul.

As with women, so it was, for Villon, with men. Loathing himself for this weaknesses, his defeats, his follies; repelled by what he saw when he reviewed his life; appalled by what he knew awaited him when, with his dreams unrealized and his ambitions unachieved, he should be only a skeleton swaying in the wind, blackened by that evil sun of which he warned his companions: he transferred, easily and naturally, to the world around him the scorn he dared not visit too openly or too frequently upon himself. If he was a liar, a coward, a buffoon, a thief, a libertine, a waster, and a blackguard, then those were the qualities and characteristics most easily recognizable and understandable in others. Yet always, back of his recognition of these qualities in himself, Villon knew himself to have been once a man greater than he now was and capable of better things. Knowledge of power begets a dream of the use of power, and such a dream will not die until life itself be dead. Defeated time and time again, and driven at last into the very shrine of his consciousness, yet that other and greater man never quite left off reminding Villon that he was still alive. And that, we begin to see, is what gave him the courage of his scorn. That, we begin now to realize, is what lent him sincerity above and beyond the conventional whining of the beggar condemned to solicit aid and comfort from those that he despises in his heart. That, we must admit, as Villon tacitly admitted it, was the thing which kept him alive in the world, in spite of knowledge of its tawdriness, in spite of knowledge of his own utter helplessness and unworthiness, and in spite of the very boredom that oppressed him. That boredom oppressed him not because he had exhausted all the values of life, but because he had exhausted all the values of himself. Thus, lost in self-warfare that could end only in the grave; victorious in that meaner nature he would have wished defeated, yet bound, by the very conditions of the quarrel to carry his triumph to its sordid close; torn between desire unfulfilled and satiety that could never again be roused to more than scornful interest: what marvel that Villon, at thirty, was an aged and a broken man? "I know all things, except myself!" he cried. And even here it is likely that he spoke truer than he knew.

Of Villon's mother we know only what he tells us: that she was a poor old woman of Paris, unlettered and devout, and that he had caused her many heartaches what of his reckless life. Of his father he has nothing to say, save that he is dead. Now, whether Villon were a de Montcorbier on the sinister side or the dexter, and whether he were a bastard or the son of a male or female bastard, the tone of Octave XXXV of the Great Testament leads one to infer that there had grown a difficulty between his father and himself. Why does he say no more of his parent than that he is dead? Why does he call Guillaume de Villon his *more* than father?

That he had no great reverence or affection for de Villon is patent. Attention has already been drawn to the hidden satire of Octave IX of the Little Testament, and we may now point out that which lurks in Octave LXXVIII of the Great. He leaves to the canon his library (a thing he perhaps did not possess) and the *Rommant du Pet au Diable*. This appears, at first glance, to be the title of some rhymed or prose romance which, he says, has been *engrossed* by Master Guy Tabarie. Now it is not likely that either Villon or another had really written such a romance. At least no vestige remains of it. But there was, in Paris, in the old palatial enclosure of King Phillip-Augustus, a ruinous tower of that very name. The location of the tower was not far from the haunts of Villon and his criminal associates. What more probable than that they often used it as a place of rendezvous? But the French *grossoyer* (to engross), as here used by Villon, is a play on that other French verb, *grossir* (to grow larger, to make big, to swell out, to exaggerate). Refer, then, to the history of the robbery of the College of Navarre (see Appendix) and read in what manner this same Master Guy Tabarie had "engrossed" the tale of that crime for the benefit of Pierre Marchand, whose evidence brought the band, including Villon, into difficulty and near to death. Refer also to Ballade IV of the Jargon for Villon's opinion of Tabarie's tongue. In a moment it becomes plain that Villon really leaves to de Villon the tower in which plans for the robbery had been concerted, and, by figure, the robbery itself, with all the attendant trouble, expense, humiliation and disgrace. Also, by reference to the *rommant* lying under a table in quires, he no doubt speaks of the whole accumulation of papers in the case—warrants, charges, transcriptions of testimony, appeals, etc. And "however rudely it be done," he adds, "the matter is so very notable as to excuse its faults." Commentators have much puzzled over the meaning of this Octave, and this is, I think, the first rational explanation of it. But if Villon had so little reverence or affection for his *more* than father, what must he have thought of his real parent? I will attempt an inquiry on what, it must be admitted, is very slight testimony and incomplete evidence.

Villon, the singer of death, why does he forego the opportunity to express, through the memory of his dead father, some elaboration of his constant conviction that all beauty ends for ever in the grave? Perhaps it was because, except to his objective understanding, the father of Villon was not, in very truth, dead for him. If, in his infancy, he had greatly loved that father, might not that love have wrought into him a jealousy of his mother? And might not that very jealousy have set up a barrier between himself and the man he dearly loved? We have already seen how the soul of this poet was secretly androgynous. If this reasoning is sound, that barrier could only have presented itself before his consciousness as active hate. Love for the father, desiring to prostrate itself before the man, but finding, between, the man's desire for the woman, would turn, first against the woman, as jealousy, later against the man, as rage hardening into hate. But in this very process, jealousy against the woman would soften. Motion can take place only along the line of least resistance. Since love could not overcome her influence, it would seek what consolation it might in allying itself with her, hoping thus to share what it could not wholly gain. Meanwhile hate, having been objective, would play its part of sentinel against discovery of a desire wounded so deeply that it dared no longer show itself. But now the father is dead, says consciousness. Nay, he is not dead to the unconscious: he is only removed out of range of the influence of the woman, and this whether there exists a belief in a future life or not. Greater and more potent than knowledge of death, there persists in the soul of the lover knowledge that now, at last, the object of love need not be longer shared. The dead father is hugged to the secret soul of the banished de Montcorbier. And the banished de Montcorbier exults in the sorrow that the wild Villon has brought to the woman who caused him pain.

Do we here seem to penetrate beyond the bounds of probability? To charge this artist and world-famous genius with an infantilism out of all proportion to what should have motivated any sane adult? But the indexes of pathological science are full of parallel cases of first-rate men who were, nevertheless, victims of necrophilism no less appalling, of homosexuality no less ineradicable, and of hermaphroditism of spirit no less capable of torturing and twisting their lives and leaving them, wrecked in body and mind, to find only in early graves that annihilation which, for such, is preferable to existence. We are here dealing with a man capable of penetrating to the very bottom of the hearts and souls of his fellows: only by discovering what was in himself shall we be able to understand his writings.

Hence Villon could speak of Guillaume de Villon, whom he secretly despised, as his more than father. For the canon entertained for him an affection which the father had not had. Only, since this affection was sexless and in no sense more than simple affection, Villon could not respond to it. This was no such love as would have aroused jealousy in the heart of the poet, had he seen it lavished upon another. He was precisely in the position of the woman, who, outwardly gentle and obedient to the man that keeps her, laughs at him and hates and despises him behind his back, both because his kindness imposes upon her conscience an obligation to respond in kind, and because, except to the lover, love is always somewhat ridiculous.

As to Villon's mother, he says that Guillaume de Villon has been sweeter to him than mother to her suckling child. This is the exact equivalent of what he has said of his father in calling de Villon his more than father. But here he speaks from a different motive. Where, before, he had voiced a grief that his father had failed to love him as he wished, now he is actuated by a desire to slur the care that his mother has given him. Later, in Octave LXXIX, he leaves her a ballade wherewith to "salute" the Virgin. He does not say "to pray." The title of this ballade was imposed by Clément Marot. But to salute the Virgin, to send greetings to the Virgin *(saluer)* is, in Villon's manner of satire, to imply that his mother will shortly have left this life. Villon *seems* to say: "To my mother, wherewith to salute the Virgin from the flesh, preparatory to greeting her in the spirit." And, going on to state that he has found no "castle or fortress," except this same Virgin, wherein to "redeem" body and soul, he adds: "Nor has my mother, poor woman." I will later develop the probable double meaning of these words "redeem" and "castle or fortress." But all this, in the light of what we have found before, reads very much as if Villon and his mother, both female, could take more consolation from the feminine pity and forgiveness of Mary than from the conventionally male nature of God. And the "bitter sorrows" and "many griefs" he has caused his mother—these, also, in the light of our previous knowledge, and taken with the "God knows!" smack rather of exultation than of regret. He does not, in fact, voice one single qualm of regret for having caused the woman pain. He merely sets down that he has done so, and passes on. Moreover, previously, in Octave XXXVIII, having said that his father is dead, "God have his soul!" he adds that his body lies under the *lame*. Immediately thereafter he says: "I know that my mother shall die, and she knows it well, the poor woman." Then quietly, without exclamation, he concludes: "And the son shall not remain." Here there is no tear for the knowledge that his mother must soon be taken from him. "She shall die," he says; and we cannot escape the inference that he voices the word exultantly, though in the next breath he somewhat ruefully remembers that he, too, shall follow her. Villon could weep for women in his Ballade of Ladies of Times Gone By, but for this particular woman he cannot weep. Gautier writes of him, that his love for his mother was like a lily growing in a foul marsh. And I do not wish it to be thought that I say he did not render to his mother the proper forms of respect and love. It is not only possible, it is probable that he did so. More, that he carried in his heart such a feeling as most men have for a mother. But this, despite the current sentimental belief, is not much. When love for the mother is not artificial, produced entirely by society's dictum that mothers must be venerated, it is usually incestuous. Only occasionally is such love real and pure. And that Villon's feeling was of this latter kind, I do not believe; and I will state my reasons more in detail hereafter.

Reasoning thus, we come to an understanding of why, in Octaves XLIII to XLV of the Great Testament, he has been quite unable to get into his lines the poignantly haunting tragedy of those dealing with a similar passing of youth and charm from women. Villon did not subconsciously identify himself with the male principle in nature. Objectively masculine though he undoubtedly was, self-pity had wrought upon him to cherish the memory of his banished ego as a man cherishes the memory of some early and long lost love. Villon the robber was hardy and brutal enough: he looked eye to eye with life and was a man. But the de Montcorbier within him had been a dreamer of tender dreams. This was no fighting, this was no conquering soul. It was plastic; it was passive; it had been born to receive impressions; it was feminine. Out of it Villon took his craftiness and the feline patience and ingenuity with which he wrapped his savage satire in seeming tenderness or in piety or in wit. Such a dual nature is commonly to be found in artists of whatsoever sort or ability. It is, indeed, doubtful whether great art can be produced save by persons of such androgynous personality. Writing of men, Villon could not feel within himself their losses as he could feel the irreparable losses of women. Hence his objective sadistic delight in ridiculing the female sex, which represented to him that part of himself he stood bound to crucify. And hence his secret masochistic joy in recalling the passing of male wit and force, since it reminded him that the way of his victorious flesh was to the grave.

And thus we come, at one stroke, upon our reply to the question: Why was Villon a great poet only when writing on some theme of death? It was because then, and only then, both natures of the warring spirit of the man were united. The inner cried out then for the thing it desired and could not find; the outer against the thing it feared and found always imminent. But in the fascination from which stem both desire and fear Villon and de Montcorbier met and merged.

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In considering the question of Villon's true name, we relied upon documents, seemingly mutually contradictory, and upon such plausible arguments as we could summon to fill the lacunae in the record. We could not then, without anticipation, have adduced the hidden testimony of his own writings. It was first necessary to establish the point, that back of the objectively writing Villon, and guiding his hand, stood the subjective personality of which we are since become aware. We have traced that personality, from its sanctuary within the innermost recesses of Villon's soul, to a stage when, as a boy, it appears to have been dominant in his being. We have surmised how it *might* have been driven from objective to subjective rule. And whether or not our conjectures have hit upon the true causes of this deposition, it remains altogether probable that we have not greatly erred in our judgment on the results of it. But now let us determine whether a similar reasoning, based upon this ulterior testimony, will bear out our first conclusions.

"Well do I know," says Villon in Octave XXVI of the Great Testament, "that if I had studied, in my days of foolish youth, and to good habits dedicated my time, I had had now a house and a soft bed." By this he may have meant: either that he had now occupied some position, the emoluments of which would have enabled him to maintain himself in ease; or that he had not been cast off by his family—that he should have had the revenues, by inheritance or allotment, of a connection of some good house. If the first interpretation is the true one, then how are we to reconcile it with the facts? For, by the records of the *procureurs de la Nation de France,* François de Montcorbier became bachelor of arts at the age of seventeen and licentiate and master in 1452, or when he was but twenty-one years of age. It would not, then, appear that as a scholar at the University he had entirely wasted his time. Nothing is anywhere said of any criminal act or accusation prior to 1454 (1455, N. S.). What could have prevented him, even so late as 1461, obtaining a place commensurate with his talents? For the crimes of which he had been accused he had been pardoned. Surely Guillaume de Villon could and would have procured him some clerical office the revenue of which would have insured his living. For, despite the coolness that must have grown between the canon and his former protegé, we know, as will appear hereafter, that in 1462 Villon again took up his residence in the cloister of Saint Benoît. Surely, also, his past misdeeds would not have been invoked against him by the Church. In a day when priests went abroad with weapons concealed beneath their cloaks, seeking quarrels upon this, that or the other cause; when abbesses held orgies in their convents and sold into prostitution the very nuns they had in charge; when mendicant friars were become rich, and absolution for any sin whatsoever could be purchased for a few Parisian *sols*, and popes in their palaces lived like emperors of Rome, flaunting their many mistresses with impunity in the eyes of an indifferent Christendom—surely in that day the peccadilloes of "a poor small scholar" need not have kept him out of holy employment. It is hardly probable, therefore, that Villon intended to say that he had failed of his house and soft couch by reason of having become unqualified to earn them. And if he did not mean to say that, then he must have meant to say something akin to our second interpretation. There seems to be no other meaning possible. Moreover, the parenthetical clause relating to the dedication of his time to good habits (or good manners or morals) appears to indicate well enough that his conduct had been censored by an authority more austere than was the Gallican Church of the mid-fifteenth century. For it was not lack of study that had brought him into disgrace—at twenty-one he had taken his degrees—but something he had done that was disreputable in the eyes of those who kept him at the University. "If I had studied"—! Few men had studied more. Do we not feel here the bitter irony directed at those whom, by hard application to duty, he had once sought to please? Not all his labor had been sufficient to excuse the "foolish youth" for which he had been condemned. And to add that he had fled from school, "like a bad boy," is but to strengthen the satirical thrust directed at this unknown authority. He had not fled the school; he had finished his course with honor. And it is altogether probable that the closing lines of the Octave were set down out of a real feeling of resentment, and not a simulated feeling, against what he considered unjust treatment.

No doubt he was wild, even from earliest youth. "I mourn the time of my youth," he cries (Oct. XXII), "of which I had more joy than others." From this he proceeds to say, in the following stanza, that now, with youth gone and himself lying at the threshold of age, he is left with neither pension nor landed revenue, while all his kindred have seen fit to disown him, forgetful of their natural duty, because of the lack of a little wealth. And the word Villon uses for wealth is not the *bien* or *biens* generally employed, but the old word *chevance*, which particularly pertained to the wealth of the orders of Chivalry.

It seems to me that those who base upon the obvious meanings of Villon's verses their notion that he was of poor and humble parentage, must wilfully ignore many a *double entendre,* although ready enough to find them in stanzas of less moment. Also, it seems to me, that those very persons have been quick to find satire in lines where there is none. For if the last four lines of Octave XXIII are addressed as a reproach to his kindred, is not the whole of Octave XXIV a vehement protestation that he has suffered unjust suspicion and treatment—always, of course, before 1454? What does he mean by saying that none can reproach him with having wasted his substance in sweet living or lechery, *except it cost them very dear?* Villon was no man of the sword. He is not now writing wittily. The very tone of the threat carries evidence enough of its sincerity. Could Villon have revealed some family skeletons, perhaps? Is this merely an idle boast to fit an idle poet's rhyme? But Villon was not used to idle rhyming. Does it "sound" as if such a veiled threat could have been directed against people in poor and humble station? Moreover, he speaks of revenge. "It's true that I have loved," he goes on, "and that I'd gladly love again"—only, now, being too poor, he cannot. And then he *does* break forth, in one of the most sardonic stanzas in the entire Testament, with the "If I had studied I know well," etc.

For see now how bitterly he mocks the person or persons at whom his verses are aimed, with the two conflicting quotations from the writings of Solomon. Observe how he thrusts upon those others the blame for his days being "all at odds and ends." Consider that in recalling the merry companions of his youth, he speaks of gentlemen and the sons of gentlemen. In Octave XXXI, ponder carefully the fourth line: *Si s'en fait bon taire tout quoy* (so they maintain a good silence), which apparently hints at those who, having "bread and sufficient dole", have shut their doors upon him. In Octave XXXIII regard and weigh the probable meaning of the last two lines, directed at whom if not at those very persons he has all along been reproaching. That his kindred have cut him off, "forgetting their natural duty," by fault of a little of the wealth of a gentleman. In Octave XXXIV it is obvious that he half apologizes by admitting that poverty says many tactless things, or thinks them if it dares not say.

Well! He has not betrayed anything. He has mentioned no names. He has kept the very letter of faith of whatever compact had been made. The world need be none the wiser because of his reproachful "digression," though he has, nevertheless, spoken his mind to those who will well enough understand him, and what he has written he has written. Of course, if anyone else cared enough or were merely curious enough to dredge a meaning other than the obvious one out of his lines, that would be none of his affair. Further he will prove that he still intends to keep faith by going at once to the extreme of poverty. So here again laughs the satirical Villon. He proclaims himself to have been poor from his youth. No one would have doubted it had he not been so insistent upon it. He is of poor and of mean extraction. This, also, would not have been questioned had the world thought him to have been always sunk in poverty. His father had never any great wealth, nor his father's grandfather, named "Erace." But this is patently a bolstering up of the story he tells, always as if in secret rebellion against the necessity for telling it, an instance of which is to be found in Octave XXVI wherein, speaking of having fled from school, he breaks off to exclaim: "In writing this word, a little more and my heart (spirit) will no longer support me!" And, as we questioned before, how is it likely, that were he really of mean extraction, he would have known the name of his paternal great-grandfather? And

"Erace"? There is no such name in Christendom or out of it. Is it a corruption of Horace? Is it a partial or corrupted anagram? It is, in any case, almost certain to have been Villon's invention. One sees no crowns nor sceptres upon the tombs of his ancestors? But he does not say, that because the emblems of royalty are absent there are no similar emblems of gentility to be seen. But now, does he consciously or unconsciously, in Octave XXXVI, have in mind his origin when his heart compares him, living in coarse garments, to a *lord* dead and rotting in a splendid sepulchre? In either case, is it such a comparison as the heart of a man of mean extraction would naturally make? And what in the world could Villon have meant in the Octave following, wherein he says: "Than to have been a lord! What say I? A lord, alas, he is no more!" Of what lord is he speaking here? Or does he play here, like a cat with the proverbial mouse, on the fears of a family that this wild, reckless one will yet, in spite of compact, disclose their secret? He goes on: "According to David the Psalmist, 'His place shall never be known.'" (It is probable that Villon here confused a portion of one of the Psalms with Chapter VII, Verse 10, of the Book of Job.) Yet he has just spoken of a lord rotting in a splendid tomb. Whose place, then, shall never be known? "As for the surplus," says Villon (and this, I submit, is a queer word for the soul, if soul is meant), "I dismiss it from my thought; it does not appertain to me, a sinner. Let the theologians handle the matter, it being the business of the preacher." Now by "theologians" might he not well have meant either the austere morality of those who had censured him and cast him out from among them, or, perhaps, some family chaplain that had advocated it? "It is the business of the preacher"—it has been the business of meddlers and busybodies to bring him to his ruin, to condemn him to a life of sin and poverty. "Necessity," he exclaims elsewhere, "it is that makes men steal, and hunger drives wolves to leave the wood." Let these "theologians" make, now, the most of what they have done. He considers that the responsibility has been lifted from his shoulders.

Certain scholars have thought that Villon's mother was a native of Anjou. It will be remembered that Guy Tabarie told Pierre Marchant that Villon had gone to Angers, in Anjou, in 1456, to visit an uncle, who lived there, in order to prepare the way for the robbery of a priest of that city. And *La Grande Encyclopédie* (published at Paris by the *Société Anonyme de la Grande Encyclopédie*) states that Villon's mother was very probably of Anjou. Why, now, following Octave XXXVII, the closing lines of which have consigned a "surplus" to the care of "theologians," does he say: "Thus I am not, considering it well, the son of an angel *(ange)*, wearing a diadem of stars and other heavenly bodies"? What logical sequence is there in the obvious meaning? But what Villon wishes to say, and what he does say, *sotto voce*, as it were, is: "Thus I am not, considering it well in the light of all that has happened and been agreed upon, the son of an Angevine, inheriting a diadem with a crest emblazoned with stars or suchlike emblems of a condition above the common earth." For note well, he does not say aureole, halo, nimbus or glory. He says diadem, and the word meant and means in French precisely what it means in English. Angels do not wear diadems, nor were they so represented in those paintings of the Middle Ages that pictured their halos as the orbits of stars, crescents and meteors. Villon says, as plainly as he can under the conditions imposed, that he is not the son of an heiress of Anjou, but of a woman from whom he can expect nothing. And he strengthens the statement of her poverty when, in Octave LXXIX, in speaking of Mary, preparatory to leaving his mother a ballade wherewith to salute the Virgin, he says that "other castle or fortress" he has none wherein to "redeem" body and soul, "nor has my mother, poor woman." Why should Villon have chosen so inapt a simile for the Mother of God? The Almighty is a rock, the Rock of Ages, true enough, but the Virgin is more commonly a shrine, or other holy sanctuary, than a castle or fortress. But Villon wished to say that when evil ran hard upon him he had no castle nor fortress *inherited from his mother* wherein to flee. Moreover, in saying redeem he uses a word *(retraire)* that is almost wholly limited to the usage of lawyers, and it particularly means to redeem a *sold or forfeited estate, by right of blood or by seigniorial right.* Why should he have chosen to say *retraire* in lieu of the more commonly employed *racheter* or *réparer?* Villon does not habitually employ little used words, nor does he twist words out of their accepted meanings except when he has good and sufficient reason for doing so. And so many of these equivoques, occurring in the stanzas we have been considering, cannot all have been the result of chance. If any man have further doubts, let him first remember that Villon probably retained an infantile jealous hatred of his mother, and let him then remember that the French *ange* is also the name for what we call the angel-fish, a species of shark, and that the shark is an animal which, from time immemorial, has been reputed to be capable of eating men.

And now we see the proper sequence of his thoughts. Having said, in the Octave preceding, that his place as a lord (among the gentility) should never be known; that for the rest (surplus), that is, for the life he had been forced to lead, the matter was no concern of his and that he would henceforth let the clergy be responsible for it: now he goes on to inform us that neither from his mother can he expect any inheritance. And immediately he explains it with: "My father is dead, God have the soul of him!" In brief, whether he was the legitimate or the illegitimate fruit of the union of a de Montcorbier and a woman of Anjou, the death of his father has operated to rob him of all aid or further recognition from his father's family. And here, if yet further evidence be needed to convince one that Villon's father had *not* been poor and of mean race, is the statement that, being dead, his body lies under the *lame*. Now a *lame* is a tablet of brass, copper or more precious metal, on which is engraved an epitaph or other such inscription. Those of Villon's day were commonly of great size, and the cost of having one prepared (which implies also that it would have been let into a marble or granite monument) would have been such as no poor man could have afforded. Villon's father, whose soul is commended to God, is dead and lies under his *lame*; and now we see, even more clearly than before, with what mixed feelings of revenge, triumph and pity the son cries out that he knows his mother too shall die. He does not commend her soul to God. His pity extends no farther than to say "poor woman," and straightway he remembers that he, too, shall not long remain alive. This brings him easily and naturally to the mood out of which he has given us the great stanzas on death and the three great ballades that follow them. When he is finished with these interspersed poems, his mood is changed.

Thus, whether we inquire into Villon's origin in the light of what documentary evidence exists, or by the aid of his attitude toward the world, or from the testimony that he has himself written into the great Testament, we arrive after each inquiry at a conclusion that that origin was not among the poor. And this conclusion will not be invalidated, even though it be later proved that his name was properly neither de Montcorbier (or de Monterbier) nor des Loges. Indeed, even should it be established that his proper name was Michel Mouton, we have shown that his antecedents were not those of a gamin or a clod. And if it be objected that much or all of the foregoing argument is no more than an ingenious twisting of obvious meanings to fit a preconceived theory, the answer is: that no preconception of any theory could be made to harmonize at once with the known facts and with a fictitious meaning at variance with the obvious. Though this might happen in the case of one stanza, or of two, the chances of it continuing through many stanzas of Villon's writings are as infinity to one.

We have ascertained that he was probably not imbued with any real affection for his mother. We have seen that he certainly felt neither affection nor respect for his foster-father, Guillaume de Villon. And we have determined, that through all his life he was incapable of entertaining a deep or abiding love for any woman. If it be objected that in one or two of the Attributed Poems there breathes a spirit of true passion and devotion, the reply is: that even though these poems are conceded to have been indited by Villon, they were certainly written while he was yet very young, and that the whole tenor of them is rather the voicing of the calf-love of a stripling than the emotions of a lover come to man's estate. And whether or not the hypothesis of fixation upon the father is true of the fact (as to which, it was stated at the outset that it rested upon very meagre evidence), it will not be disputed that the many and varied references to the Bastard of the Barre must be considered as the authentic confession of Villon's hidden nature.

This Bastard of the Barre is thought to have been a member of an old Parisian family that gave several governors, counsellors and magistrates to the good city of Paris. Jean de la Barre, Count d'Étampes, was governor and provost in 1534. The editor of the edition of Villon dated 1723, *à propos* the three wisps of straw *(gluyons de fouarre)* in

Octave XXIII, L. T., says that this is, without doubt, an allusion to the three sheaves of wheat borne in the blazonry of the de la Barre family. A Daniel de Bar (de la Bar or de la Barre) was valet to Olivier le Dain, who was, in turn, valet-de-chambre and barber to Louis XI. This Daniel was exiled, by the provost of Paris, for sodomy, upon the accusation of two women. In this octave the poet contents himself with a satirical legacy and with exposing the trade *(mestier)* of this man. But in Octave LXXXIII, G. T., it is by the hand of this man that he sends a ballade to Rose, and it is by the spoken message of this man that she is to be insulted. Such a message, delivered by anyone, would have been brutal enough, but to have it spoken by Perenet de la Barre (a male bawd, as Shakespeare would have called him) was to heighten the effect of it. Moreover, Villon's choice of a male rather than a female prostitute to carry the insult speaks well enough in support of our argument. He says to Rose, in effect, that he prefers the man to her, although doubtless he did not intend to say that. Yet it is likely that she so understood it. In Octave XCVIII he jests, indecently, leaving him three loaded dice, *de bonne carre.* Now *de bonne carre* means, properly squared; but it also means (referring to a man's back), broad or well developed. And in Octave LXVII it is to this same Bastard that he leaves his old mats, *before* he has invoked the grace of God and *before* he has made his formal beginning of testing. No other legacy occurs prior to the ending of Octave LXIX. And these old mats are left to the good Perenet immediately after Villon has said that his executors (Moreau, Provins, Robin, Turgis) are to have disposition of all his property, "even to the bed whereon I lie." It would seem, then, that in making exception of these mats the testator really makes exception, unconsciously doubtless, but not the less certainly, of the Bastard himself. In other words, the satire he is about to invoke and to scatter so prodigally among his acquaintance is, for the moment, withheld from de la Barre—at least from what de la Barre stood for in the secret soul of the poet. Certainly his legacy here is contemptuous enough. But it is the objective Villon who writes; it is the subjective man who prompts that *something* shall be written.

Nor must we overlook the undoubtedly equivocal character of Octave CLXXII, wherein a young priest, Colas Tacot, is to have entire charge of probating the Testament. For if no play is here intended on *testamens* with Latin *testes* (and no commentator has been able to supply an explanation for the "Master of Testaments"), it is certain that the last half of the octave contains several word plays. He would gladly drink at Tacot's expense, though it cost him his (Villon's) *cornette. Cornette* may be interpreted in various ways, but it means, for one thing, dice-box; and for another, a night-cap worn by women, hence, metaphorically, the woman herself. Readers of the *Satyricon* of Petronius Arbiter will remember the obscene use of the word night-cap to mean the attentions of a catamite after an orgy among women. And did Tacot but know how to play in *ung trippot* (a gambling hell or a brothel), he had had from Villon *Le Trou Perrette* (which may mean Perrette's Den, Perrette's Inn, or Perrette's Hole). In other words, Villon *seems* to say that he would gladly revel with Colas Tacot, at the latter's house, though it cost him his mistress; and if only the priest knew how to "play" as they gambol in a brothel, he had left him Perrette's Hole (this last word having a double meaning also).

Moreover, in the Ballade of Villon's Request to the Duke of Bourbon, we find him saying that the coveted loan will be speedily repaid if there is mast (nuts) to be found in the forest about Patay, and if chestnuts are salable. The word Villon uses for mast is *gland*, which means also glans. And in speaking of chestnuts *(chastaignes)*, he perhaps plays on some such form as *chat-aines* (literally, cat groins); while in the stanza following he says unequivocally that he is tempted to sell his *santé* (health, but by figure, appearance, good looks).

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It has appeared to me to be necessary to devote the foregoing to a brief analysis of Villon's contradictory character in order to come to a point from which one may properly begin the study that his verses deserve. So much that is false has been said of him by romancing novelists and writers for the stage, and so much has been set down by those bent on making him palatable to modern taste—which last, while not deliberately false, is yet not strictly true—that I have thought it expedient, in clearing away such lumber, to cast my argument into a form of oblique attack on these fictitious and misleading writings. For this reason almost everything I have set down up to this point has been in greater or less degree derogatory. But if François Villon had great and numerous faults, he was not without great virtues, and these not a few. This fact must be self-evident. No man could have become undisputed father of French poetry, and no man could have brought the judicious, not alone of his own country, but of all the civilized world, to a grateful acknowledgment of his eminence, who wrote only out of malice, contempt and fear. To examine his work in an effort to learn what, more than such sorry motives, prompted him to write when and as he did, will be the labor of the ensuing pages.

III

It is a wonderful thing, that in the world of human beings, as in that of animals in general, this manifold restless motion is produced and kept up by the agency of two simple impulses—hunger and the sexual instinct; aided a little, perhaps, by the influence of boredom, but by nothing else; and that, in the theatre of life, these suffice to form the primum mobile *of how complicated a machinery, setting in motion how strange and varied a scene!*

—SCHOPENHAUER.

Having said that Villon has gained eminence as a man who wrote out of more than the sorry motives of malice, contempt and fear, it is not without grave risk of seeming to contradict myself that I quote what I have quoted from Schopenhauer. Yet a moment's reflection will serve to show, that limited as one is by the accepted definitions of words, such an apparent contradiction is inevitable in contrasting proximate with ultimate causes. For if it be true that all impulses may be resolved into the primitive impulse of hunger, which, in its turn, may be resolved into the will to live, or—to state it in terms of a more mechanistic theory—into the inertia of matter in motion, then love itself, even of the purest and most unselfish kind, gives of its substance only that it may the better feed. But we habitually deal with ultimates only in matters involving life itself.

And by reason of the accepted definitions of words, we must differentiate between love and hunger, even so far as to think of them as antithetical impulses. If to love greatly and unselfishly and to the point where the lover will "give his life for his friend" be a virtuous thing, how can we say that desire, which is hunger, is a thing of evil, even though it be of a kind to demand, for its own satisfaction, the very life of that friend? Nevertheless, we must say that such love is virtuous and that such desire is evil. Somewhere between the two extremes lies the indefinite but nonetheless real line of demarkation. And though malice, contempt and fear are more proximate causes than hunger, yet as between them, on the one hand, and those motivations called virtuous, on the other hand, we must draw similar indefinite lines of difference. We do not commonly ascribe human actions to ultimate causes. Were this not so, we should not habitually say of one writer that he writes out of a broad fellowship with humanity, and of another that he sets down only his own antipathies. We should be compelled to admit of no difference between the motivations of Saint Matthew and François Villon.

Thus, although we have hitherto been assiduously attempting to pierce into the darkness of Villon's soul to the causes that moved him, it now remains to examine what he wrote, as it reacts upon ourselves, in the light of such obvious impulses as we commonly ascribe to govern the actions of mankind.

To the serious reader of Villon there is perhaps no more striking quality in his writings than their chastity. This may seem a strange word to employ in description of verses reeking with invective of the brothel, the gambling hell and the gutter. I have known those who, having read my translation, in manuscript, of the Ballade of Envious Tongues, have laid it down, nauseated, and resolved to have no more to do with a writer who could delight in the heaping up of so much filth. It was not that those persons were prudish, or biased by the narrow moral inhibitions of certain religious sects, or wanting in intelligence; it was only that, revolted by the taste of such a poet, they could not overcome the disgust his lines evoked. Nor do I wish it to be thought that I am, in any sense, defending that sort of taste, or rather, that lack of taste. What I do defend and what I do hold up for the admiration of men, is the picture of the loathsomeness of envy, as it is drawn here by Villon. He does not preach. We are not told that slander and back-biting are morally wrong because they hurt others as well as ourselves. Villon merely says that the vilest filth for which his imagination can find language is not too vile for the tongues of those who deal in defamation. It is his own opinion. It makes no difference that his own malice may, often enough, have descended to speak thus. We are not now concerned with whether his very imputation of slander to the brothers Perdryer is itself slander of the worst. What remains is that this most unsparing of human denunciations is written for all time as the opinion of a man who knew what honor was, even though he failed to follow it. One cannot but be reminded of a passage in an essay of J. K. Huysmans on Felicien Rops (Putnam's translation), reading: "At bottom, when one stops to think of it . . . there are no really obscene persons except the chaste ones. Everybody, the truth is, knows that continence engenders frightfully libidinous thoughts, and that the man who . . . is involuntarily pure becomes overheated in solitude, goes out of his head and begins to rave, until he comes finally, in his lively dreams, to the point of orgiastic delirium. And so, it is altogether likely that the artist who violently treats carnal subjects is, for one reason or another, a chaste man."

I have been asked why I have not softened some of the more offensive expressions in this ballade, retaining the sense without their shocking vulgarity of language. My reply has been, that to do so would be to alter the work of a dead artist—and I am not quite scoundrel enough for that. It would be comparable to the action of a certain Art Institute in employing a nameless painter to cover with painted veils the sexual characters of a master's pictured nude. It would be comparable to the action of the Victorian Ruskin in destroying the canvases of a dead artist for whom he was executor. I have not, I hope, made my English lines more gross than are the French originals. At the same time, I have not been imbued with that perverted conceit which is capable of such deeds as those to which I have alluded. The Ballade of Envious Tongues will not be read by snickering adolescence: there is nothing of delightful naughtiness within it. And if leering senescence is capable of extracting a lewd pleasure from the lines, then by the changing of a single word it may read what is equally fitted for itself.

Thus, allowing for the indelicate taste—an indelicacy more attributable to the society of the fifteenth century than to any perversion in the writer—this ballade becomes, to the serious mind, a very chaste thing, indeed. It might so easily have been made gross in quite another way. I myself, in translation, could have retained all the meaning and sense of it while, at the same time, injecting into it no little of that sly tickling of the libido, of which our present-day literature is so full. But Villon has maintained a high restraint in this respect. He has not sought to popularize his poem by an appeal to any sexual emotion. He has not written for the child mind, either in children or adults. He speaks here as a man of the world may speak to sophisticated honorable folk.

If much the same objection can be made to the Ballade of Villon and Fat Margot, then the reply need not be greatly different. Here is no vaunting of vice for the sake of vice. The vice depicted here certainly holds nothing of allure. Neither does the poet tell us how shameful it is, nor how wrong. There is no hint of a "message" in these old lines. Yet where is the boarding-school girl, where is the broken roue, to take any titillation of the erotic nature from reading them? And here also the poem might so easily have been made pleasantly disgraceful. Does anyone imagine that it is more difficult to put something of such nastiness into a poem than to leave it out? If so, then let him ask any realistic painter of the nude whether it is more difficult to portray the human body grossly or in such wise as will give greater pleasure to the mind.

Again, in the Ballade of the Fair Adventuress to the Light-o'-Loves, it is not wantonness that prompts the speaker to give what advice she gives, nor any innate sympathy with wantonness; but it is the bitter realism of a woman who has lived her life almost to its end and found, through all the days and the years of it, that fate and the world stood always equally ready to cheat her of her good. Her doctrine is an equivocal one, if you like, or, if you like, it is unsound or perverse or cruel. The point I make is, that she nowhere advocates lewdness for the mere sake of lewdness. To the contrary, she says plainly enough, albeit by implication, to the girls who hear her, that they must often crush down antipathy, disgust and hate. And only a fool or a comstock can be so unclean as to extract pleasure from sexual congress after that. No more in this poem than in the Regrets of La Belle Heaulmière is there any celebration of vice for the sake of vice, any attempt to make of an acknowledged evil a thing desirable in itself, or any covering of what is shameful with the alluring veils of mystery. I do not argue that Villon's characters advocate what is sound or even always necessary. But I do contend that, with due allowance for theme and the manners of his time, this poet has written with a restraint that amounts to nothing less than chastity of spirit and intention .

And gross as some of these poems are, I find them less displeasing that such morally laudable verses as the Good Counsel to Those of Forlorn Hope. For here he does preach, unequivocally and shamelessly. And I have marvelled much at those who could be shocked and offended by the low taste of one poem, while accepting without question the still lower manners of the other. Robert Louis Stevenson, shocked upon discovering that Villon was not always sincere, rushed to the extreme of declaring that he never was. Stevenson was mistaken. Villon could be as stupidly in earnest as any moral Victorian.

Be that as it may be, I advance the statement that François Villon made his pictures, for the most part, in a peculiarly chaste and impersonal style. Being human, he lapsed at times, as witness the Good Counsel, to which I have just alluded. Being human, he could not always paint without a suggestion of the sensual, as witness Octave LIII of the Great Testament. And being human, he unblushingly delighted, upon occasion, in jesting in such unrestrained fashion (Oct. CI, G. T.) as the most reserved of us now and then love to indulge. But this is when he is being merely cleverly satirical or designedly amusing. In what the world concedes to be his greater work, he is uniformly chaste.

We have already seen why this should have been so. The man was fundamentally incapable of feeling sexual love. Therefore, except when he was consciously writing of sexual relations, his thoughts were not colored by desire. Even, indeed, when he does write objectively of love, it is love of a pale and emaciated sort that informs his verses. There is no passion in it. There is not even any glow. And when he tells us of Fat Margot or La Belle Heaulmière, we cannot resist feeling that Villon, the inner man, while with, is by no means of, these certain persons. As we have already learned, what there was in their lives to catch and hold his attention, his interest, and the little of sympathy he could give, was the eternal mystery of being and of death. I once knew a man who could and frequently did spend a night in revelry among prostitutes. And he would go home at dawn and kneel down at his bedside and pray. He saw nothing strange nor incongruous in leaving the stews to demand an audience of his Creator. No qualm disturbed his conscience, for he had not, in his soul, committed any sin. And thus it was with Villon. I make no doubt that when, as a good Catholic, he went to a confessional, he did not trouble to burden God with a recital of his sexual pastimes. They would have seemed to him of no more moment than would the drinking of a glass of wine. Hence it was that, writing of the blackest and most revolting vice, he could preserve so curiously chaste and impersonal an attitude. Vice for its own sake made no appeal to him. Neither did virtue, for its own sake. Moreover, he knew virtue to be duller and stuffier and dowdier and altogether less amusing than pleasant vice. But with it all, he was primarily practical. He did not greatly romanticize the life he saw and knew. It was only something to be painted. Rembrandt painted his naked wife or a side of beef with equal art and equal equanimity. Villon draws for us Fat Margot and his old mother praying in the church, with equal skill. There is as much evidence of gusto in the one poem as in the other. There is nothing, indeed, to choose between them, except on grounds of taste. He showed the thing as it was; it was neither his fault nor his grief if it were not beautiful. It was a part of the life he knew. What he saw and what he knew he must get, somehow, onto canvas, for that was the urge that moved him. The story was painted; he would take up another brush and turn to the painting of another scene.

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After the troubadours the poetry of the Middle Ages was written by men and women concerned with external events. If a large part of the body of their verse is allegorical, nevertheless it is still principally objective. The allegories are but the poetical vestments of action. The characters, the emotions, and the reactions of the writers themselves are seldom seen or felt in their lines. Perhaps this is why the poetry of those times is of so little interest to us. There is no fire in it; the passions with which it deals are either altogether imaginary or altogether forced. Color it has in plenty, even in verses of the most conventional cast, and beauty and wit and skill. But the poet, in seeking to animate his puppets, seems always to have been afraid or ashamed to identify himself with them: it is not he that loves, hates, weeps, fights, dies; he remains to the last only the omniscient author, and they must move to suit his will. In short, this poetry is not wrung from the souls of its makers, where alone it should have been conceived. It is not that it is conventional in form; it is that it is not informed with feeling. Once the interest of the allegory is exhausted, the interest of the entire poem is gone.

But about the close of the fourteenth century a change began to creep into the literature of France. It is idle, here, to speculate upon the causes of that change, if, indeed, it may be referred to any cause beyond the evolution of the human mind. With inaction comes introspection. The Hundred Years' War was being carried on by professionals only. When profane literature began to cease to be solely the diversion of rulers and soldiers (the monks at this time being generally too far gone in debauchery to do more than paint or carve), when men and women of education and leisure began to practice it, it began to be subjective. Writers were learning that in an intellect blessed with a lively imagination, given not so much to invention as to co-ordination and analysis, there was a far richer field for exploitation than in all the pomps and appearances of the outward world. Love not as cause, but as effect, began to interest men, war not as arena, but as spectacle.

Hence we find more and more of the individual poet emerging into his verses, more and more of the eternal microcosm of the soul being called upon to explain and to interpret the visible cosmos, until, in François Villon, we come at last upon a man who dared depart forever from the enclosed spaces of his predecessors and go seeking through the vast reaches of himself the answers to all the questions he would ask. What answers he found there were, more often than not, far from satisfactory; sometimes he found himself amazed, confounded, defeated by these very replies, until he was impelled to cry out: "I know all things, except myself!" But he had looked far enough to have learned that in his own soul was more of the world than his two eyes could see, his two ears hear, or his ten fingers touch. Things, he learned, acted in some measure upon himself; and according as he reacted to such stimuli, by so much was he alive. To probe, then, into the causes of these reactions, to trace out and to identify the headwaters of his emotions, became for him a more absorbing business than the mere description of extraneous events. And into his Epitaph in Form of a Ballade he could put more of thought and feeling, more love of labor and hence more art, than into the Ballade Against Those Who Mis-say of France—a ballade evoked by no more than a conventional patriotism which perhaps he did not feel.

All poetry worthy of the name is an attempt at an escape. It is not produced from placidity, from contentment, from happiness. It is a protest, and it must have had its origin in pain. For pain is the only thing that motivates us: when we are without pain we are happy.

But if Villon had learned that in his own soul transpired the dramas of which he was aware, he was yet not so great a fool as not to have observed that those dramas were themselves but the endless and inevitable consequences of external stimuli. With the notions of Franc-Gontier he could toy, and out of them he could dramatize a refutation, to his own satisfaction and pride; but he did not forget that but for Gontier he should have missed the incentive to build his play. Thus there was little in the world he knew that did not interest him. Realizing that the tragedy of La Belle Heaulmière did not exist, save as he should write it, he was profoundly stirred to study of the materials out of which it would be made. Yet if for this study he must have leisure and calm blood, and must remain the onlooker, nevertheless he must be always moving. He dared not look too long at any one scene, lest he grow absorbed and become the victim of pity, sympathy or love. And so, through all his verses, we are carried breathlessly along by the insatiable curiosity of the man. Nothing is too small to escape his notice, nothing too large for him to scrutinize in the round. And always we are half consciously aware that we see men and women and their deeds not as the world saw, but as Villon looked upon them. I think that no man, first learning of Bishop Thibaut d'Aussigny from this poet, can ever quite rid himself of the prejudice thereby aroused. I think that even such a figure as was Jacques Coeur must, after one has read Villon, take on something of personal glamour—something which that treasurer of a king did not, perhaps, before possess. For this thief Villon had the "seeing eye" and the artist's sure hand. In a line, in a phrase, often in a word, he fixes the dominant trait of a character, and there the person stands, "in his habit as he lived," breathing, and moving, and real.

This interplay of perception and execution, this balance of subjective with objective faculties, of observative with creative impulses, could only have existed in a nature at once delicate and coarse. Christine de Pisan could be shocked by portions of the *Roman de la Rose*, but she had not the hardihood to voice her protest in more than moral prose. There was nothing of art about it. Jehan de Meung was possessed of a desire to expose the corruptions of the priesthood, but he could not handle his materials without distaste, he could not touch pitch without becoming defiled. Hence there is in his writing no more than indignation; we come upon nothing of the great gusto with which Villon could seize the elements in which he worked. For whatever else may be true or false of the artist, he must love to wallow in and be smeared with the materials in which he works.

That Villon possessed a soul attuned to delicacy and yet capable of such gross contacts, we have already learned, and we have also learned something of why this was so. What we have not acquired—what we never shall acquire—is any knowledge of what lay behind the mystery of his genius. It is well enough to analyse any particular trait and to affirm that it is the result of such, or such, a cause. But to penetrate behind known causes and to come upon the ultimate cause of all—that we cannot do. Genius has been defined many times, and in different ways. It remains a mystery. What was there in the soul of this criminal and invert that enabled him to become the supreme literary figure of his century? Life urges the poor mason no less than the poor artist. But why does the one chip stone always into impersonal blocks, while the other cannot rest until he has made of it something of beauty and given it life and voice? "Some," said Villon, "have become great lords and masters; some beg all nude." And for all our modern learning, we can no more say why this must be than could the groping poet of the mid-fifteenth century.

* * * *

François Villon was born, according to his own testimony, in 1431, the same year that witnessed the execution of Joan of Arc. He came into the world at a time when Feudalism, already sick unto death, was preparing for its last long revel on the Field of the Cloth of Gold. It was a period, too, when France, for the first time since the death of Charlemagne, was unified in purpose and in government, and was victoriously carrying to a conclusion her long struggle to become a nation. On every side the old and the worn were dying away and being rapidly forgotten. There seemed to be in the very air a new spirit. By every post came tidings of new developments and new discoveries. Printing had been invented and was being rapidly perfected. Books were multiplying. The fall of Constantinople in 1453 was to loose into Europe a horde of monks and scholars of all sorts, who would bring with them the odds and ends of the learning of the Greeks. Men were beginning to distrust, openly and stoutly, the infallibility of the Church, and whispers were even beginning to be heard doubting the dogmatism of the Aristotelian philosophy.

In sixty years Columbus was to set sail toward the discovery of a western continent. In fifty years Erasmus was to dip his pen into the ink of that satire which still shames and holds up to ridicule our social fabric. In forty years Copernicus was to be born. In short, it was a time of change, a time of reformation and of renaissance. And in this time came François Villon, singing along the ill-paved streets of Paris, a childe of the older order, but disinherited and driven out to seek his way among the new. And the editors and critics, viewing him thus, ask magnificently: "Is it any wonder that he became the father of French poetry and the prophet of a newer day?"

With all due respect—poppycock! Villon undoubtedly became the father of modern French poetry, but he was certainly no prophet. Villon wrote poetry for the reasons that anyone else with that particular urge writes it—because he wanted to; because it gave him opportunity for saying what he wanted to say, and of being heard; and because it gave him something to do, something to relieve the tedium of existence. One cannot be always at a woman's breast, nor always plotting crimes. Moreover—and this is the prime reason—he was, like all writers, so swelled and flown with his own conceit that he could not sit quietly in the chimney-corner: he must advance to the center of the floor and of attention, and flap his wings and crow. He must tell the whole world about himself, and about what he thought of himself and of the world—there was nothing he would not tell if only he might be allowed to speak. Charles d'Orléans had been a gentleman, and there were many things he simply would not tell. Villon's gentility had been of birth only.

"But," say the editors and critics, disputing Clément Marot, "one must make no doubt that he had not borne away the crown of laurel before all the poets of his time had he been nourished upon the polished elegancies and refinements of taste and judgment of the royal court." Already in the time of Francis I, it was becoming fashionable to laud the supposed virtues of the masses; and kings did not object to this, for the reason that all intelligent persons understood well enough that such virtues existed only in imagination. The proud could afford to be condescendingly humble. Had not Jesus been born in a manger? But the critics habitually attribute to a striking personality motives greater and more far-reaching than could have been probable. They confuse effects with causes, results with ambitions and desires. One is reminded of what George Sand wrote in one of her forewords, that she was "continually surprised that criticism should be so far-seeking, when the simplest ideas and most trivial circumstances are all that inspire the creations of art." She might have added that those who write for the purpose of founding schools, or to preach "messages," or to deliver themselves of more than the necessity for writing—those are the soonest and most deservedly forgotten.

But what, then, has preserved Villon? Why do his lines persist among the literatures of the world? What was there in the work of this Parisian thief to influence so deeply the notions of Rabelais, of Marot, of Ronsard, of Verlaine, of Baudelaire, and of all that came and all that shall come after them? What, indeed, was there in Villon to cross the Channel and stamp itself so indelibly upon the poems of such a man as Byron? For whole stanzas of "Don Juan" are little more than "sea-changes" of what Villon had previously said; and unless I err greatly there are not a few passages in "Childe Harold" itself to show the Frenchman's influence. Why, even as I write, is yet another translation of Villon's poems being made in America and yet another commentator struggling to fix upon some trait of that strange and perverse character in order to use it as a key to unlock the mystery of the poet's soul?

On every side we hear it said that Villon was the first of the moderns, whatever that may mean. For what is this "modernism" of which we hear so much? Is it a matter of form? There are no new forms under the sun. Is it the so-called spirit of democracy? Or of equality? Or of liberty? But these have been the hackneyed themes of writers since the dawn of literature. Is it, then, a searching after new truths? There are no new truths to be discovered, save in the realm of science, and that is scarcely the domain of poetry. No one, in fact, and least of all those who most prate of it, seems able to define this word modernism as meaning any thing or idea or ideal that was not old when the pyramids were young. Some, less intelligent than they ought to be, are befooled and blinded by the amazing developments in mechanical devices, forgetting, or not knowing, that there is no machine on earth, however complicated and ingeniously put together, but is a combination of some or all of the three primitive kinds of levers. All of the babblers about "modernism" seem to be agreed that it is somehow involved in an interpretation of "this keen-questing twentieth century," to borrow the phrase of one of the most "modern" little lady critics. But that is all bosh. "This keen-questing twentieth century" is no more keen and no more questing than any other century has been. It has more and better tools to work with, that is all. Not even the introspection of which we were lately speaking is new in literature: it was only new to the barbarians of western Europe. But if by "modernism" is meant timelessness, then such criticism becomes intelligible. In this sense Homer and Shakespeare are "modern," for all the absurd machinery of their major poems, and in this sense all the work of Arnaut Daniel and Charles d'Orléans is dead. It is with the cant and jargon of the critics that I quarrel here—cant and jargon happily not so necessary to literature as to painting, that dumbest of the arts.

The Encyclopedia Britannica, in its article on Villon says: "What really distinguishes Villon is (sic) the intenser quality of his poetic feeling and expression *and what is perhaps arrogantly called the modern character of his subject and thought.*" (The italics are mine, of course).

Let us have done with patter. A man does good work, or he does not. And good work in literature is not in any wise dependent upon its being "modern" or romantic or realistic or what one will. Good work in literature presupposes that one has something to say; having something to say, it *must* be said interestingly, and, in poetry, it *should* be said beautifully. Good work in literature demands an honest intention and an honest ability. It may be sophisticated and civilized, or it may evidence largely that youthful naïveté which pursues the phantom of the "new." But always it must be honest.

Villon's work lives today because it is interesting. Moreover, what he had to say was sometimes very well said. It is not that he was patriotic. Christine de Pisan was a better patriot by far; indeed there is no greater reason for giving Villon such a title than his badly written Ballade Against the Enemies of France. It is not that he was a lover of mankind, for this he most assuredly was not. It is not that he was prophetic. He was reactionary, he was destructive, he was without hope, vision or desire. It is not that he was pious, or filial, or faithful, or industrious, or a good citizen, or brave, or a righter of wrongs, or a breaker of images. He was none of these things. Villon simply wanted to write. Wanting to write, he wrote of what he could see and understand. And he was able to get into his writing something that makes it interesting, and he was able to do his work, for the most part, well. Since these are all the requirements for the making of literature, there is nothing more to be said of him in this respect.

* * * *

Nothing is known of Villon's origin; nothing is known of his end. Suddenly out of darkness he appeared, and we can only guess as to what he was and whence. He is first heard of in 1449 (1450, N. S.) when summoned for the baccalaureate at the University of Paris. We know that he participated in the brawl with Chermoye; that he was one of the robbers of the College of Navarre; that he was imprisoned at Meung until pardoned by the general amnesty of Louis XI. He is last known to men in 1462 (1463) when, in November of that year, he was again living, presumably with his foster-father, in or near the cloisters of Saint Benoît. Did he meet again that Katherine de Vaucelles, whom he had once loved and who had had him beaten? We do not know. Probably he did not, since Pierre de Vaucelles was not principal at the College of Navarre after 1456. But we do know, by this, that he did not die of the complication of diseases produced of cold water, poverty, persecution, love and whatnot, of which he complains in his Testaments. On the contrary he was very much alive when, one day in November, he became involved in a street brawl in which Master François Ferrebouc, scribe of the Officiality of Paris (see Appendix), was wounded. It is of record that he was arrested, tortured, tried and condemned to the gallows; but the sentence was commuted to banishment. In truth, his end is shrouded in mystery as dark and seemingly as impenetrable as his origin, save to the eyes of conjecture. After the Great Testament he seems to have written nothing more, or, if he did, it has been lost to us.

He was a man who, I think, must have had in him something of gentle blood. Also, I think that there was in him more of the Celt than of the Saxon.

Life was a good thing to him, many-colored and various, and he greatly loved the flux and the rhythm of it and the laughter and the mystery. Yet because of that mystery, which no man can fathom, he was a man weary with thinking, and thought had robbed him early of his wild delight in life. Moreover, because of that mystery, he knew the laughter of life to be always very near to tears. He perhaps did not fear, more than another, the physical suffering involved in death, but he could not contemplate, unmoved, the probable cessation of being. He had not at his command the Teutonic indifference; he was not so sure of Valhalla as is the German mind. Catholic he was, of course, outwardly and in form, but the foreign creed of the East was no more a fixed faith in his soul than it has ever been in any healthy man of Europe.

Villon loved many women with his five senses, and none at all with his heart. He was vain, he was conceited, he was cowardly, he was a beggar and he was a thief. He was, in the phrase of Stevenson, "the sorriest figure on the rolls of fame." But he was not, and this is entirely to his credit, the grotesque and melodramatic figure of romance that Stevenson, with his middle-class mind, would have wished him to be, and that the cheaper sort of novelists and playwriters have made him out to be. When he fought it was under protest, and there is no record of his ever having roused the rabble for the rescue or protection of country, king or maid. He was a sneak and a waster, a cheat and a mocker, a drunkard, a drabber, and a drone. But he was no fool, and that is more than may be said of many a high-flown patriot. He did not love without reason and he did not believe without cause. Moreover, he was an artist of great rank; and insofar as he was an artist he was an honest man. Five centuries after his death this may be written of him. Perhaps it is not the thing that will be written of those scribblers who prostituted their talents to "democracy" during the late World War.

Nevertheless it is a strange thing that this man should have captured the romantic fancy of the world. There was in him nothing at all of the qualities that make lovable such a figure, real or legendary, as that of Robin Hood. His crimes were not dashingly done, as were those of Dick Turpin or Jesse James. He was no Cellini in his love affairs: he was a common pimp.

But if we may not look to his life and the deeds he did for the cause of this kindly feeling in so many thousands of honest folk, then we must look to find it in his verse. "Where are the snows of last year gone?" he asks, and "Where is the mighty Charlemagne?" And in a breath he answers with "So much carries the wind away." It is not that such questions had not been asked before, nor that a similar answer had never before been given. But never, before nor since, have such questions been formulated in stanzas of more haunting grace, in phrases of more compelling wistfulness. Where shall we come upon a lament more beautifully wrought than that of La Belle Heaulmière? With what faultless imagery has he pictured himself as swinging with his companions on the creaking, wind-swept gibbets of Montfaucon. And where, even in Solomon, is it more clearly stated that "death seizes all without exception"? Platitude of course, and if you will. But if you will, then you are of those who, blinded by the amazing machinery of the present and by the amazing chemistry, are convinced that there is really anything new under the sun. It is true that a speaking doll is of later contrivance than the ancient wooden ones. Villon was not concerned with mechanical dolls.

But Villon's poems have endured and shall long time endure. The deeds of the man are long since over and ended. His life was a losing struggle, as are the lives of all men that are born on earth. It is the common lot, and there is nothing in the fact itself to fascinate, to terrorize, nor to amuse. Fallen angel or glorified ape, no man is worth a tear. Yet if, by ever so little, some man of great talent can fling a dignity into the sorry process to the grave, or over-paint the stark wretchedness of it with beautiful, though sombre, veils, then we who are born and who endure and who must die, we who never asked to be allowed to inhabit the earth, and who now, for all our asking, will not be permitted to remain—we will not hesitate to accord to such a man the honor that is his due. For, if he has held out no hope to us, at least he has lent us pride; and if he has not comforted, nevertheless he has voiced our trouble.

Thus it may be that such a man as was François Villon is really, after all, entitled to a fine romantic veneration. Not the greatest of poets, nor the most affecting, he was yet one of the most human. Let him have his praise. God knows that it will not be for long. The five hundred years that are almost elapsed since his death are no more than a very time-tick. Who shall remember him when fifty thousand years are overpassed? But who, then, shall remember any of us?

Meanwhile I offer here his poems, again translated into English verse. I have striven to be as honest with Villon as the conditions of my labor would permit. In a similar spirit of honest criticism I pray you read.

J. U. Nicolson.

RIVERSIDE, September, 1927

CLEMENT MAROT OF CAHORS
VALET OF KING FRANCIS FIRST
TO THE READERS

Of all the good books that have been imprinted in the French tongue, I have never seen another so incorrect, so grossly corrupted, as that of Villon; and I am astonished (since he is the best of the Parisian poets) that the printers of Paris and the people of that city have not given this matter greater attention. I am, certainly, in no wise his neighbor; but for love of his amiable understanding and as recompense for that which I have taken from the reading of his works, I have here done for him what I would might even be done for me, so my own works should ever be likewise fallen into such unseemly state. So much confusion have I found in the order of the couplets and verses, in the rhythms, in the language, in the rhyme and in the reason, that I have not known whereupon I should the more have pity—whether upon the work so heavily damaged or upon the ignorance of those who have thus misprinted it. To make proof of this, I lay here before you Readers, one of the incorrect stanzas of [illegible] published Villon, which shall be witness and bear testimony to you of a great number of other passages as badly damaged, jumbled and confused as this:

Now it is truth that after complaints
and tears
And groaning anguish,
After sadness and distress,
Labor and slowly passing grief,
Suffering has wrought upon my under-
standing,
Grinding it round, like a ball,
And exhibiting more than the comments
On the moral opinions of Aristotle.

(SEE OCT. XII, G. T.)

Who will deny that the meaning of this stanza has been greatly changed? Yet thus, in very truth, have I found it printed in the old editions—nay, even in worse wise in the new. But, now, compare the above with the manner in which it has been emended, and thereon be graciously pleased to judge:

Now it is truth that after complaints
and tears
And groaning anguish,
[illegible]*ter sadness and distress,*

Labor and slowly passing grief,
Suffering has wrought upon my under-
standing,
Grinding it (round like a ball)
And exhibiting to me more than the
comments
Upon the moral opinions of Aristotle.

Behold how it has seemed to me that the author intended his lines: and suffice you this little emendation as advertisement of what I have changed and corrected in a thousand other instances, whereof some have been easy to do and others very difficult. Nevertheless, partly from the old editions, partly with the aid of those good ancients who know the lines by heart, and partly by a natural divination of judgment, our Villon has been reduced to better form and to more complete than has been seen in our time; and this without having touched or tampered with his ancient and archaic speech, with his fashion of versifying, with his confusions and long parenthetical clauses, with the quantity of his syllables, nor with his rhymes, as many feminine as masculine: in all of which points he has not sufficiently observed the true rules of French poetry. I do not advise young poets to follow him in this; but that they cull out and gather his better phrases as if they were beautiful flowers, that they study the verve and spirit of his writing, that they learn of him properly to describe what they have seen, and that they imitate that brilliant vein of his even as it appears in his Ballades, this being truly fine and heroic. And make no doubt but that he had borne away the crown of laurel before all the poets of his time had he been nourished upon the polished elegancies and refinements of taste and judgment of the royal Court. As for the dexterity, wit and industry of the legacies of his Testaments, sufficiently to know and understand them, one must have been a Parisian of his time and have been acquainted with the places, things and persons of which and of whom he speaks: the memory whereof, as it shall more and more pass out of the minds of men, so much the less shall be comprehended the meaning of the legacies aforesaid. For this cause, whosoever would compose a literary work that shall long time endure, let him not take for subject that which must base upon matters so vulgar and so particular. The rest of the work of our Villon (this much aside) is of such artifice, so full of good doctrine, and so overlaid and painted with a thousand beautiful colors, that time, which effaces all, has not set upon this the seal of his oblivion; and still the less shall it be effaced hereafter, as good French literature shall come more and more widely to be known and gathered together and treasured.

And because (as I said before) I have not touched with change any portion of his antique diction, I have provided for you, upon the margins, along with my other annotations, explanatory notes concerning what has seemed to me to be most difficult of understanding, leaving to your prompt intelligences the rest, such as, in example: *ly Roys* for *le Roy* (the King), *homs* for *homme* (man), *compaing* for *compaignon* (companion); also many plurals for singulars, and divers other incongruities of which the badly finished language of that time was full.

Wherein I have been compelled to find fault with entire verses or stanzas, I have been at pains to remake them more nearly (as it has been given to me to do) according to the intention of the author: and such passages will be found expressly marked with this mark (†), in order that those who would read them as Villon may have written them shall be enabled the more readily to do so, obliterating at pleasure the new and substituting therefor the old.

Furthermore, the terms and verses that have been interposed will be found replaced in their proper places; the too short lines have been lengthened; those too long have been abbreviated; omitted words have been supplied, those interpolated have been deleted; and with all this, the titles have been improved upon.

Finally, I have changed the order of the book, because it has appeared to me more in keeping with reason to have it begin with the Little Testament, inasmuch as that was composed five years before the other.

Touching the Jargon, I leave it to be corrected and explained by the successors of Villon in the arts of the burglar and the crook.

Peradventure, then, if anyone shall say that not everything has been replaced with that to which more properly it appertains, to him I say in answer: that if he had suffered so great wounding in his person as I have found Villon injured in his works, he should find an expert surgeon indeed who could think to heal him whole again without the leaving of a single scar: but as for me, it shall well suffice if the labor I have herein striven to do shall be agreeable to the King my sovereign, who is the moving cause of this my enterprise and the execution thereof, and who has been graciously pleased to hear it and to give his good judgment upon many of the passages of the work ensuing.

BALLADE BY THE TRANSLATOR

PARIS—1456

Grim winter stars and goblin moons
Peep through their ragged winding sheet,
And many a shadow sweeps and swoons
As Paris dreams and grey wolves meet;
The watch goes by on crunching feet
To halt within yon tavern's light,
In envy of its ease and heat—
Villon is drinking deep tonight.

Fair Ysabeau beside him croons
A love-ballade of haunting beat;
The Abbess broods on yesternoons
When sparrows quarreled among the
 wheat;
And now a catch roars out to greet
New-beaded stoups or put to flight
The wail of night winds hagged with
 sleet—
Villon is drinking deep tonight.

Poor beggar of small royal boons,
Cutpurse and drabber, dicer, cheat,

Fellow to sworders, sots, buffoons,
Hunted anon for gallows-meat;
Yet singer of high songs and sweet,
Tender of one grown old and white,
And soothsayer for stew and street,
Villon is drinking deep tonight.

ENVOI

My lords and gentlemen, we eat
Toss pots and part from sound and sight.
I wonder in what ingle seat
Villon is drinking deep tonight!

LE PETIT TESTAMENT DE MAISTRE FRANÇOIS VILLON
FAIT L'AN 1456

THE LITTLE TESTAMENT OF MASTER FRANCIS VILLON
DONE IN THE YEAR 1456

LE PETIT TESTAMENT

I

Mil quatre cens cinquante et six,
Je, François Villon, escollier,
Considérant, de sens rassis,
Le frain aux dents, franc au collier,
Qu'on doit see œvres conseiller,
Comme Vegèce la racompte,
Saige Romain, grand conseiller,
Ou autrement on se mescompte.

II

En ce temps que j'ay dit devant,
Sur le Noël, morte saison,
Lorsque les loups vivent de vent,
Et qu'on se tient en sa maison,
Pour le frimas, près du tison:
Cy me vint vouloir de briser
La très amoureuse prison
Qui souloit mon cueur desbriser.

THE LITTLE TESTAMENT

I

In fourteen fifty-six, this year,
I, Francis Villon, clerk and scholar,
Considering, with judgment clear,
Bit in the teeth, lunged into collar,
That one's work should be scanned with valor,
As old Vegetius counsels one
(Wise Roman that, no idle scrawler),
Or leave but chaos when all's done:

II

At this time, as I said but now,
Near Christmas, when the season's dire,
When wolves must live on wind somehow,
And one stays home for days entire,
What of the frost, and hugs the fire:
To me there came a will to break
From prison cell of love's desire,
Wherein I've had so long heartache.

III

Je le feis en telle façon,
Voyant Celle devant mes yeulx
Consentant à ma deffaçon,
Sans ce que jà luy en fust mieulx;
Dont je me deul et plains aux cieulx,
En requérant d'elle vengence
A tous les dieux venerieux,
Et du grief d'amours allegence.

IV

Et, se je pense à ma faveur,
Ces doulx regrets et beaulx semblans
De très decepvante saveur
Me trespercent jusques aux flancs:
Bien ilz ont vers moy les piez blancs
Et me faillent au grand besoing.
Planter me fault autre complans
Et frapper en un autre coing.

V

Le regard de Celle m'a prins,
Qui m'a esté felonne et dure;
Sans ce qu'en riens aye mesprins,
Veult et ordonne que j'endure
La mort, et que plus je ne dure.
Si n'y voy secours que fouir.
Rompre veult la vive souldure,
Sans mes piteux regrets ouïr!

III

This method I am led to choose,
Seeing that She stands before my eyes,
Consenting to my hard abuse,
Though gaining naught in any guise,
Whereof my grief assails the skies,
Demanding that her debt be paid
By all those gods love glorifies,
And for my injuries, their aid.

IV

And if I fancied them for me,
Those dulcet sighs and glances sweet,
Of so deceptive courtesy
They pierced me to the flanks with heat—
They haunt me now on dust-white feet,
Yet fail me in my direst need.
I must go sow with other wheat
And strike in other soil my seed.

V

Her eyes have always held me true,
Yet she's been hard and fickle, sure;
And all for naught I've had to do
She wills and rules that I endure
Death and my life's whole forfeiture.
No hope is left, save flight from here.
She breaks our living pact and pure,
Nor will she lend a pitying ear.

VI

Pour obvier à ses dangiers,
Mon mieulx est, ce croy, de partir.
Adieu! je m'en voys à Angiers,
Puisqu'el ne me veult impartir
Sa grace, ne me departir.
Par elle meurs, les membres sains;
Au fort, je meurs amant martir,
Du nombre des amoureux saints!

VII

Combien que le départ me soit
Dur, si fault-il que je m'esloingne.
Comme mon pauvre sens conçoit:
Autre que moy est en queloingne,
Dont onc en forest de Bouloingne
Ne fut plus altéré d'humeur.
C'est pour moy piteuse besoingne:
Dieu en veuille ouïr ma clameur!

VIII

Et puisque departir me fault,
Et du retour ne suis certain:
Je ne suis homme sans deffault,
Ne qu'autre d'assier ne d'estaing.
Vivre aux humains est incertain,
Et après mort n'y a relaiz:
Je m'en voys en pays loingtaing;
Si establiz ce present laiz.

VI

Thus, to escape these dangers down
I think it best that I depart.
Adieu! I'll go to Angers town,
Since she will give me not her heart
Nor other grace, for all my art.
I die for her, though sound in limb
And strong, a martyr to love's dart,
Numbered among the saints of him.

VII

However hard such parting be,
Needs must I go and go alone.
As my poor reason teaches me,
Other than I with her is prone.
Whence, never in forest of Boulogne
Has man gone more athirst than I.
It's woeful work that I atone:
Would God that God might hear my cry!

VIII

Wherefore, because I must withdraw,
While none can my return reveal,
Not being a man without a flaw
Nor more than others bronze or steel,
Life being so liable to repeal
And death being so improvident,
Seeing myself in lands unreal,
I make this present Testament.

IX

Premierement, au nom du Père,
Du Filz et du Saint-Esperit,
Et de la glorieuse Mère
Par qui grace riens ne périt,
Je laisse, de par Dieu, mon bruit
A maistre Guillaume Villon,
Qui en l'honneur de son nom bruit
Mes tentes et mon pavillon.

X

A celle doncques que j'ay dict,
Qui si durement m'a chassé,
Que j'en suys de joye interdict
Et de tout plaisir dechassé,
Je laisse mon cœur enchassé,
Palle, piteux, mort et transy:
Elle m'a ce mal pourchassé,
Mais Dieu luy en face mercy!

XI

Et à maistre Ythier, marchant,
Auquel je me sens très tenu,
Laisse mon branc d'acier tranchant,
Et à maistre Jehan le Cornu,
Qui est en gaige detenu
Pour ung escot six solz montant,
Je vueil, selon le contenu,
Qu'on luy livre, en le racheptant.

IX

First, in the name of God the Sire,
The Son and even the Holy Ghost,
And of Our Lady of Desire,
By whose grace never soul is lost,
I leave—God help me!—what I've most
To William Villon—my fair fame,
Because my tents and pennons boast
The honor of his bruited name.

X

To her, then, whom I have described,
And who so cruelly has beguiled
That from all joy I am proscribed
And from all pleasure thus exiled,
I leave my broken heart, enfiled,
Pale, piteous, dead to nobleness:
She sought this evil when she smiled—
God grant her mercy, nonetheless!

XI

To Master Ythier, who's in trade,
To whom I feel obliged four-fold,
I leave my keen, bright, tempered blade,
And to good Master John Cuckold,
That is detained in pawn—all told
The mortgage is six cents, no more—
I will that, per contract of old,
One now deliver out of store.

XII

Item, je laisse à Sainct-Amant
Le Cheval Blanc avec la Mulle,
Et à Blaru, mon dyamant
Et l'Asne rayé qui reculle.
Et le décret qui articulle:
Omnis utriusque sexus,
Contra la Carmeliste bulle,
Laisse aux curez, pour mettre sus.

XIII

Item, à Jehan Trouvé, bouchier,
Laisse le mouton franc et tendre,
Et ung tachon pour esmoucher
Le bœuf couronné qu'on veult vendre,
Et la vache qu'on ne peult prendre.
Le vilain qui la trousse au col,
S'il ne la rend, qu'on le puist pendre
Ou estrangler d'un bon licol!

XIV

Et à maistre Robert Vallée,
Povre clergeon au Parlement,
Qui ne tient ne mont ne vallée,
J'ordonne principalement
Qu'on luy baille legerement
Mes brayes, estans aux trumellières,
Pour coeffer plus honestement
S'amye Jehanneton de Millières.

XII

Item, to Saint Amant transmit
The White Horse with the She Mule Inn;
Blaru my diamond, to-wit,
And Striped Ass, balky for chagrin.
And that decree which they begin
With *Omnis utriusque sexus*
Against the Carmelite bull for sin,
I leave to curates to perplex us.

XIII

Item, to butcher John Trouvé
I leave the Wether free and tender,
And lash to fan the flies away
From the Crowned Ox, he being the vender,
And from the Cow, seeing none may rend her.
The rogue who ties her on his neck,
If he refuse again to send her,
Let him be hanged for birds to peck.

XIV

To Master Robert Vallée give
(Poor clerk to Parliament is he
And holds no land whereon to live)—
I order this especially,
That one deliver soon for me
My drawers (they're hanging near my trunk)
To hood with more propriety
Jenny of Millières, his punk.

XV

Pour ce qu'il est de lieu honeste,
Fault qu'il soit myeulx recompensé,
Car le Saint-Esprit l'admoneste,
Ce obstant qu'il est insensé.
Pour ce, je me suis pourpensé,
Qu'on lui baille l'Art de mémoire,
A recouvrer sur Malpensé
Puys qu'il n'a sens mais qu'un aulmoire.

XVI

Item plus, je assigne la vie
Du dessusdict maistre Robert . . .
Pour Dieu! n'y ayez point d'envie!
Mes parens, vendez mon haubert,
Et que l'argent, ou la pluspart,
Soit employé, dedans ces Pasques,
Pour achepter à ce poupart
Une fenestre emprès Saint-Jacques.

XVII

Derechief, je laisse en pur don
Mes gands et ma hucque de soye
A mon amy Jacques Cardon;
Le gland aussi d'une saulsoye,
Et tous les jours une grosse oye
Et ung chappon de haulte gresse;
Dix muys de vin blanc comme croye,
Et deux procès, que trop n'engresse.

XV

But he's an honest underling
And should have better recompense,
The Holy Ghost admonishing
To bear with those devoid of sense.
Therefore I now devise, prepense,
To him the Art of Memory,
To be had of Magniloquence,
He being so near to lunacy.

XVI

Yet further for the livelihood
Of the said Robert—nay, my kin,
For God's love envy not this good!
But sell my mail and lambrequin,
Using the coin, or most therein,
To purchase for this lobster's games,
Before the Paschal feasts begin,
A scribbler's window near Saint-James.

XVII

Again, I give in pure bequest
My silken gloves and hood of silk
To friend James Cardon; for the rest
A long cap-tassel of that ilk,
And each day goose (I do not bilk)
And capon high in grease and sheen,
And wine ten hogsheads, white like milk,
And two lawsuits to keep him lean.

XVIII

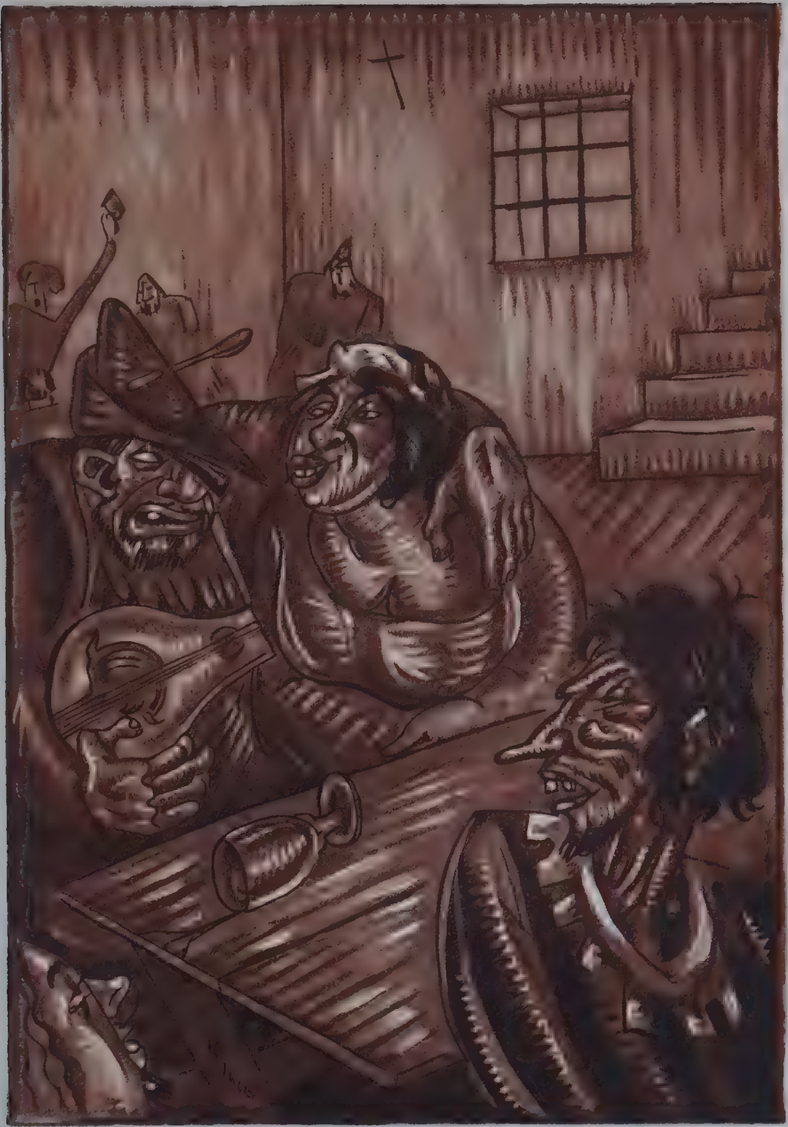
Item, je laisse à ce jeune homme,
René de Montigny, troys chiens;
Aussi à Jehan Raguyer, la somme
De cent frans, prins sur tous mes biens;
Mais quoy! Je n'y comprends en riens
Ce que je pourray acquerir:
On ne doit trop prendre des seins,
Ne ses amis trop surquerir.

XIX

Item, au seigneur de Grigny
Laisse la garde de Nygon,
Et six chiens plus qu'à Montigny,
Vicestre, chastel et donjon;
Et à ce malostru Changon,
Mouton qui le tient en procès,
Laisse troys coups d'ung escourgon,
Et coucher, paix et aise, en ceps.

XX

Et à maistre Jacques Raguyer,
Je laisse l'Abreuvoyr Popin,
Pour ses paouvres seurs grafignier;
Tousjours le choix d'ung bon lopin,
Le trou de la Pomme de Pin;
Le doz aux rains, au feu la plante,
Emmailloté en jacopin;
Et qui vouldra planter, si plante.



To Master James Raguyer, the latch
I leave of Popin Wells . . .

XVIII

Item, I leave to that young bum,
René de Montigny, three dogs;
Also, to John Raguyer, the sum
Of francs one hundred, from my togs.
But hold! a thought this writing jogs.
I cannot know how rich I'll be:
One must not fatten friends like hogs
And leave one's own in poverty.

XIX

Item, I give Lord de Grigny
To guard the tower of Nigeon,
And six dogs more than Montigny
And Bicêtre castle and donjon;
And to that traitorous boor, Changon,
The mutton whence he takes his gains,
And three good lashings well laid on,
And peace to sleep at ease—in chains.

XX

To Master James Raguyer, the latch
I leave of Popin Wells, to share
With his poor sisters for to scratch;
And each day choice of dainty fare
Within the Fir-Cone tavern, where,
With back to faggots, feet to fire,
And deep in talk, with never care,
He lets what will transpire, transpire.

XXI

Item, à maistre Jehan Mautainct
Et maistre Pierre Basannier,
Le gré du Seigneur, qui attainct
Troubles, forfaits, sans espargnier.
Et à mon procureur Fournier,
Bonnetz courts, chausses semellées,
Taillées sur mon cordouennier,
Pour porter durant ces gellées.

XXII

Item, au chevalier du guet,
Le heaulme luy establis;
Et aux pietons qui vont d'aguet
Tastonnant par ces establis,
Je leur laisse deux beaulx rubis,
La Lenterne et la Pierre-au-Let . . .
Voire-mais, j'auray les Troys licts,
S'ilz me meinent en Chastellet.

XXIII

Item, à Perrenet Marchant,
Qu'on dit le bastard de la Barre,
Pour ce qu'il est ung bon marchant,
Luy laisse troys gluyons de feurre
Pour estendre dessus la terre
A faire l'amoureux mestier,
Qu il luy fauldra sa vie querre,
Car il ne scet autre mestier.

XXI

Item, John Mautaint now I place,
And Peter Basanier, beneath
The kindness of that lord, and grace,
Who keeps down crime with pain and death.
And on my lawyer Fournier, faith,
Skull caps and leathered hose bestow,
And cobblers' cuttings I bequeath
To keep him through these days of snow.

XXII

Item, to Captain of the Watch
I do a giant's helm devise;
And to his men who seek to scotch
The prowlers in the merchandise,
Two rubies of most handsome size—
The Lantern and the Pierre-au-Let—
But so the Three Beds be my prize
If taken to the Châtelet.

XXIII

Item, to Peter Merchant (called
The Bastard of the Barre), because
He's a good merchant, somewhat galled,
I leave three little wisps of straws
To strew the ground when he withdraws
To ply his amorous business where
He needs must go when hunger gnaws,
Of other trade not being aware.

XXIV

Item, au Loup et à Chollet,
Je laisse à la foys un canart,
Prins sous les murs, comme on souloit,
Envers les fossez, sur le tard;
Et à chascun un grand tabart
De cordelier, jusques aux pieds,
Busche, charbon et poys au lart,
Et mes housaulx sans avantpiedz.

XXV

Derechief, je laisse, en pitié,
A troys petitz enfans tous nudz,
Nommez en ce present traictié,
Paouvres orphelins impourveuz,
Tous deschaussez, tous despourveus,
Et desnuez comme le ver;
J'ordonne qu'ils seront pourveuz,
Au moins pour passer cest yver.

XXVI

Premierement, Colin Laurens,
Girard Gossoyn et Jehan Marceau,
Desprins de biens et de parens,
Qui n'ont vaillant l'anse d'ung ceau,
Chascum de mes biens ung faisseau,
Ou quatre blancs, s'ilz l'ayment mieulx
Ils mangeront maint bon morceau,
Ces enfans, quand je seray vieulx!

XXIV

To John the Wolf and to Chollet
A good fat duck to each let fall,
Caught as we used, at end of day,
Upon the moat-side of the wall;
Also to each a cloak or pall
That covers him from face to feet,
Wood, charcoal, peas with pork, and all
My old top-boots and obsolete.

XXV

Again, I leave, on pity bent,
To three small children, now all bare,
Named in this present Testament,
Poor orphans, homeless as the air,
Shoeless, with never shirts to wear,
Friendless, and naked as the worm—
I will that they be given care,
At least throughout this winter's term.

XXVI

To Colin Laurens, who thus lives,
Gerard Gossoin and John Marceau,
Deprived of goods and relatives,
Not worth a bucket-handle, no,
To each let some small bundle go,
Or four cents, if they'd rather gold.
They shall eat many a morsel O,
These urchins, when I'm grey and old.

XXVII

Item, ma nomination,
Que j'ay de l'Université,
Laisse par résignation,
Pour forclorre d'adversité
Paouvres clercs de ceste cité
Soubz cest intendit *contenuz:*
Charité m'y a incité,
Et Nature, les voyant nudz.

XXVIII

C'est maistre Guillaume Cotin
Et maistre Thibault de Vitry,
Deux paouvres clercs, parlans latin,
Paisibles enfans, sans estry,
Humbles, bien chantans au lectry.
Je leur laisse cens recevoir
Sur la maison Guillot Gueuldry
En attendant de mieulx avoir.

XXIX

Items plus, je adjoinctz à la Crosse
Celle de la rue Sainct-Anthoine,
Et ung billart de quoy on crosse,
Et tous les jours plain pot de Seine,
Aux pigons qui sont en l'essoine,
Enserrez soubz trappe volière,
Et mon mirouer bel et ydoyne,
Et la grace de la geollière.

XXVII

Item, my right of nomination,
Held of the University,
I leave, by dint of resignation,
To help them from adversity,
To two poor clerks of this city
(I *mean* to mention them below):
Charity for their paucity
Incites me, seeing how bare they go.

XXVIII

To Master William Cotin, one,
And Theobald de Vitry, two,
Poor clerks by Latin overrun,
Peaceable boys and humble, who
Sing well in choir, I give, in lieu
Of worse until their fortunes mend,
Rent of Bill Gelder's house—and you
Must know it's pillory I intend.

XXIX

And further, to this Cross let be,
With crook to crunch them and constrain,
That of the rue Saint Anthony,
And each day one full pot of Seine
To all those pigeons held with pain
In cages built for strife and stress,
And my fine mirror made with tain,
And favors of the jaileress.

XXX

Item, je laisse aux hospitaux
Mes chassis tissus d'araignée;
Et aux gisans soubz les estaux,
Chascun sur l'œil une grongnée,
Trembler à chière renffrongnée,
Maigres, velluz et morfonduz;
Chausses courtes, robbe rongnée,
Gelez, meurdriz et enfonduz.

XXXI

Item, je laisse à mon barbier
Les rongneures de mes cheveulx,
Plainement et sans destourbier;
Au savetier, mes souliers vieulx,
Et au fripier, mes habitz tieulx
Que quant du tout je les délaisse;
Pour moins qu'ilz ne coustèrent neufs
Charitablement je leur laisse.

XXXII

Item, aux Quatre Mendians,
Aux Filles Dieu et aux Beguynes,
Savoureulx morceaulx et frians,
Chappons, pigons, grasses gelines,
Et puis prescher les Quinze Signes,
Et abatre pain à deux mains.
Carmes chevaulchent nos voisines,
Mais cela ne m'est que du meins.

XXX

Item, I leave the hospitals
My spider-webs, both white and brown;
And to the sleepers under stalls,
To each a black eye handed down,
And right to tremble at a frown,
And to be thin, unshaven, cold,
And go in rags and starve and drown,
And die like dogs when they are old.

XXXI

Item, I leave my barber now
The quondam clippings of my hair,
All in fee simple; and endow
With shoes no longer fit to wear
My cobbler; and my clothes, I swear,
Shall be the ragman's when I'm through—
Charitably I make him heir
For less than what they cost when new.

XXXII

To the Four Orders Mendicant,
God's Daughters and Bogard divines,
Savory bits and rare—I grant
Capons and pigeons, hens and wines,
And leave to preach the Fifteen Signs,
And with both hands to break good bread.
Monks ride our neighbors' mares, but mine's
An interest not thus cuckolded.

XXXIII

Item, laisse le Mortier d'or
A Jehan l'Espicier, de la Garde,
Et une potence à Sainct-Mor,
Pour faire ung broyer à moustarde.
Et celluy qui feit l'avant-garde,
Pour faire surmoy griefz exploitz,
De par moy sainct Anthoine l'arde
Je ne lui lairray autre laiz.

XXXIV

Item, je laisse à Mairebeuf
Et à Nicolas de Louvieulx
A chascum l'escaille d'un œuf,
Plaine de frans et d'escus vieulx.
Quant au concierge de Gouvieulx,
Pierre Ronseville, je ordonne,
Pour luy donner encore mieulx,
Escus telz que prince les donne.

XXXV

Finalement, en escrivant,
Ce soir, seullet, estant en bonne,
Dictant ces laiz et descripvant,
Je ouyz la cloche de Sorbonne,
Qui tousjours à neuf heures sonne
Le Salut que l'Ange predit;
Cy suspendy et cy mis bonne,
Pour pryer comme le cueur dit.

XXXIII

Item, the Golden Mortar's store
To Sir John Spicer of the Garde,
And crutch, *ex voto*, of Saint-Maur
To use in pestling his mustard.
But to his man sent hitherward
With writs, may all his members twitch
And good Saint Anthony not retard!
I leave him nothing but the itch.

XXXIV

Item, I leave to Mairebeuf
And Nicholas de Louvieu,
Each one an eggshell full enough
Of obsolete *francs* and *écus* too.
While to the porter of Gouvieu,
Peter de Ronsseville, I ordain
A more munificent revenue—
Such gold as princes give when sane.

XXXV

Finally, in this category,
Writing alone, in mood to write,
Shaping this will and allegory,
I heard the Sorbonne's clock recite,
As always, when it's nine of night,
That blessing which the Angelus
Foretells. And here I stayed my flight
For heart-felt prayers and duteous.

XXXVI

Cela fait, je me entre-oubliai,
Non pas par force de vin boire,
Mon esperit comme lié;
Lors je senty dame Memoire
Rescondre et mectre en son aulmoire
Ses espèces collaterales,
Oppinative faulce et voire,
Et autres intellectualles.

XXXVII

Et mesmement l'extimative,
Par quoy prosperité nous vient;
Similative, formative,
Desquelz souvent il advient
Que, par leur trouble, homme devient
Fol et lunaticque par moys:
Je l'ay leu, et bien m'en souvient,
En Aristote aucunes fois.

XXXVIII

Doncques le sensif s'esveilla
Et esvertua fantasie,
Qui tous argeutis resveilla,
Car la souveraine partie,
En suspens, estoit amortie
Par oppression d'oubliance,
Qui en moy s'estoit espartie
Pour montrer des sens l'alliance.

XXXVI

That done, I half forgot myself,
Though not by force of wine in me;
Spell-bound, I thought no more of pelf,
But saw in soul Dame Memory
Take back and shroud the faculty
Of knowing false from true, and all
Her special talents two or three,
And others intellectual.

XXXVII

And in this vein the estimative,
By which we gain prosperity;
The similative and formative,
Whereof it happens frequently,
By their vexation, man we see
Go monthly mad as ever mimes:
I read it, I remember me,
In Aristotle, many times.

XXXVIII

Thereon the sensitive, which drowsed,
Did battle with the phantasy,
Which all the subtleties aroused
For the superlative degree
That, in suspense, might weakened be
By force of the oblivious,
And had been else dispersed in me,
Indicative of the sensuous.

XXXIX

Puisque mon sens fut à repos
Et l'entendement desveillé,
Je cuiday finer mon propos;
Mais mon encre estoit gelé,
Et mon cierge estoit souflé.
De feu je n'eusse pu finer.
Si m'endormy, tout enmouflé,
Et ne peuz autrement finer.

XL

Fait au temps de ladicte date,
Par le bon renommé Villon,
Que ne mange figue ne date;
Sec et noir comme escouvillon,
Il n'a tente ne pavillon
Qu'il n'ayt laissé à ses amys,
Et n'a mais qu'un peu de billon,
Qui sera tantost à fin mys.

CE FINE LE TESTAMENT
VILLON

XXXIX

Seeing that my mind was in repose
And sense fastidious, now, and nice,
I thought to finish; but arose
And found my ink was only ice,
My candle out, nor one device
To light it more, of fire no smell;
And so to bed where, in a trice,
In muffled sleep all ended well.

XL

Done at the first aforesaid date
By the well known Villon, who'd blush
To eat rare food and delicate;
Black as a dry old scrubbing-brush;
Who's no more velvet, silk nor plush;
All's gone to one or other friend,
Save a few thin-worn coppers—tush,
They, too, will soon have reached an end!

HERE ENDS THE TESTAMENT OF VILLON

LE GRAND TESTAMENT
DE MAISTRE FRANÇOIS VILLON
FAIT EN 1461

THE GREAT TESTAMENT
OF MASTER FRANCIS VILLON
DONE IN 1461

LE GRAND TESTAMENT

I

En l'an trentiesme de mon eage,
Que toutes mes hontes j'eu beues,
Ne du tout fol, ne du tout sage.
Nonobstant maintes peines eues,
Lesquelles j'ay toutes receues
Soubz la main Thibault d'Aussigny,
S'evesque il est, seignant les rues,
Qu'il soit le mien je le regny!

II

Mon seigneur n'est, ne mon evesque;
Soubz luy ne tiens, s'il n'est en friche;
Foy ne luy doy, ne hommage avecque;
Je ne suis son serf ne sa biche.
Peu m'a d'une petite miche
Et de froide eau, tout ung esté.
Large ou estroit, moult me fut chiche
Tel suy soit Dieu qu'il m'a esté.

THE GREAT TESTAMENT

I

In the year thirtieth of my age,
When I have drunk of every shame,
Not all a fool nor yet all sage,
In spite of suffering and blame
That all at once upon me came
At hands of Thibaut d'Aussigny—
If he's a bishop, I proclaim
As such he'll never seem to me!

II

He's not my lord nor bishop—nay,
If so, then I'd be far from rich.
No faith nor fealty need I pay:
I'm not his slave, the son of a bitch!
He gave me lean crusts black as pitch
And water, many a summer's day,
And by and large, no matter which,
May God do so to him, I pray!

III

Et, s'aucun me vouloit reprendre
Et dire que je le mauldys,
Non fais, si bien me sçait comprendre,
Et rien de luy je ne mesdys.
Voycy tout le mal que j'en dys:
S'il m'a esté misericors,
Jésus, le roy de paradis
Tel luy soit a l'ame et au corps.

IV

S'il m'a esté dur et cruel
Trop plus que cy ne le racompte,
Je vueil que le Dieu eternel
Luy soit doncq'semblable, à ce compte! . . .
Mais l'Église nous dit et compte
Qui prions pour nos ennemis;
Je vous dirai: J'ay tort et honte:
Tous ses faictz soient à Dieu remis!

V

Si prieray pour lui de bon cueur,
Par l'ame du bon feu Cotard,
Mais quoy! ce sera doncq par cueur,
Car de lire je suys faitard.
Prièe en feray de Picard;
S'il ne la sçait, voise l'apprandre,
S'il m'en croyt, ains qu'il soit plus tard,
A Douay, ou à Lysle en Flandre!

III

If there be one this charge would brand,
Claiming that I misstate the case,
He's not my friend, who'd understand;
I do not lie to save my face!
I only say, that in that place,
If ever mercy fell to me,
May Jesus, King of Heaven and Grace,
Forgive his evil, equally!

IV

If he was harsh to me and stern
More than I say here in my song,
I only hope that God return
The self-same justice, cold and strong!
But Holy Church holds, all life long,
That prayer for foes best intercedes:
I tell you I've had shame and wrong!
Yet in God's hands I leave his deeds.

V

Well, pray I will, and of good heart,
By the soul of the late Cotard, I swear.
But what! This would be prayer by art;
I loath new reading, I declare.
Well, I will say a Picard's prayer.
If he know not how this thing slanders,
Let him go learn the meaning there
At Douai, or at Lille in Flanders.

VI

Combien que, s'il veut que l'on prie
Pour luy, foy que doy mon baptesme,
Obstant qu'à chascun ne le crye,
Il ne fauldra pas à son esme.
Au Psaultier prens, quand suys à mesme,
Qui n'est de bœuf ne cordoen,
Le verset escript le septiesme
Du psaulme de Deus laudem.

VII

Si pry au benoist Filz de Dieu,
Qu'à tous mes besoings je réclame,
Que ma pauvre prière ayt lieu
Verz luy, de qui tiens corps et ame,
Qui m'a preservé de maint blasme
Et franchy de vile puissance.
Loué soit-il, et Nostre-Dame,
Et Loys, le bon roy de France!

VIII

Auquel doint Dieu l'heur de Jacob,
De Salomon l'honneur et gloire;
Quant de prouesse, il en a trop;
De force aussi, par m'ame, voire.
En ce monde-cy transitoire,
Tant qu'il a de long et de lé,
Affin que de luy soit mémoire,
Vive autant que Mathusalé!

VI

Nay, if he'll have my prayer sincere,
Then by my christened faith, I'll pray;
I cry this not in every ear,
But he'll not fail to win his way.
I'll turn to a psalter when I may,
That is not cased in sheep's hide grim,
And then the seventh verse I'll say
Of the *Deus Laudem* psalm for him.

VII

So to the blessed Son of God,
To whom all ills of mine I take,
Who my poor prayers gives place to plod,
Who wrought through flesh my soul awake,
Who has preserved me for his sake,
And freed me out of mean mischance—
All praise to him and Mary make,
And Louis, our good King of France!

VIII

To whom may God give Jacob's luck,
Solomon's honor, aye, and glory;
Of will he has too much, and pluck,
And force too, by my soul that's hoary.
In this wide world and transitory,
Wherever men pass up and down,
May tongues repeat his name and story
Long as Methusalah's renown!

IX

Et douze beaulx enfans, tous masles.
Veoir, de son très cher sang royal,
Aussi preux que fut le grand Charles,
Conceuz en ventre nuptial,
Bons comme fut sainct Martial.
Ainsi en preigne au bon Dauphin;
Je ne luy souhaicte autre mal,
Et puys paradis à la fin.

X

Pour ce que foible je me sens,
Trop plus de biens que de santé,
Tant que je suis en mon plain sens,
Si peu que Dieu m'en a presté,
Car d'autre ne l'ay emprunté,
J'ay ce Testament très estable
Faict, de dernière voulenté,
Seul pour tout et irrevocable.

XI

Escript l'ay l'an soixante et ung,
Que le bon roy me délivra
De la dure prison de Mehun,
Et que vie me recouvra,
Dont suys, tant que mon cœur vivra,
Tenu vers luy me humilier,
Ce que feray jusqu'il mourra:
Bienfaict ne se doibt oublier.

IX

And twelve fine sons to bless his reign
God grant him of his royal blood,
All mighty as was Charlemagne,
Conceived in wedded womanhood,
All brave as Saint Martial was good.
Such to the Dauphin also send;
I wish him no more ill, nor would,
Than Paradise to claim his end.

X

But since this weakness draws me hence,
Though more in goods than body spent,
While yet I keep my common sense,
The little thereof God has sent
(For on none other have I leant),
I make this present will to be
My last and only Testament,
For all time given, irrevocably.

XI

Written in this year, sixty-one,
Wherein the good King set me free
From that hard Meung jail—which done,
Life roused a bit from lethargy.
And now, while I have strength to be,
I'll never cease to serve this King
In all he may demand of me:
Good deeds deserve remembering.

Icy commence Villon à entrer en matière pleine d'érudition et de bon sçavoir.

XII

Or est vray qu'après plaingtz et pleurs
Et angoisseux gémissements,
Après tristesses et douleurs,
Labeurs et griefz cheminemens,
Travail mes lubres sentemens,
Esguisez comme une pelote,
M'ouvrist plus que tous les Commens
D'Averroys sur Aristote.

XIII

Combien qu'au plus fort de mes maulx,
En cheminant sans croix ne pile,
Dieu, qui les pellerins d'Esmaus
Conforta, ce dit l'Evangile,
Me montra une bonne ville
Et pourveut du don d'esperance;
Combien que le pecheur soit vile,
Riens ne hayt que perseverance.

Here begins Villon to enter upon matter full of erudition and of brave knowledge.

XII

Now truth is, after sighs and tears
Of heartache and long suffering,
After the melancholy years
With toil and torment clamoring,
Trouble has ground my wits to bring
Some point to bear on bawd and bottle,
And taught me more than any thing
In Ibn Rushd on Aristotle.

XIII

Yet when my worst ills on me wrought,
Poor as I was from dungeon cell,
God, who the Emmaus pilgrims brought
To comfort, as the Gospels tell,
Showed me a place where I might dwell
And let fair hope her gift impart;
However vile one's evil well,
God only hates a hardened heart.

XIV

Je suys pecheur, je le sçay bien;
Pourtant Dieu ne veult pas ma mort,
Mais convertisse et vive en bien;
Et tout autre que péché mord,
Soye vraye voulenté ou enhort,
Dieu voit; et sa misericorde,
Se conscience me remord,
Par sa grace pardon m'accorde.

XV

Et, comme le noble Romant
De la Rose dit et confesse
En son premier commencement,
Qu'on doit jeune cuer en jeunesse
Quant on le voit vieil en vieillesse,
Excuser; helas! il dit voir.
Ceulx donc qui me font telle oppresse,
En meurté ne me vouldroient veoir.

XVI

Se, pour ma mort, le bien publique
D'aucune chose vaulsist myeulx,
A mourir comme ung homme inique
Je me jugeasse, ainsi m'aid Dieux!
Grief ne faiz à jeune ne vieulx,
Soye sur pied ou soye en bière:
Les montz ne bougent de leurs lieux,
Pour un paouvre, n'avant, n'arrière.

XIV

Sinner I am, I know it well;
Yet God would not death strike me dumb,
But that I live and sin repel;
For whosoever will may come,
Alone or led; and God will plumb
All hearts, nor hold his grace from me,
If with a conscience no more numb
Pardon be sought, repentently.

XV

And thus in that great lay they sing—
The noble Romance of the Rose—
Aye, in its very opening—
That one should pardon youth, which goes
With so light heart to age, and grows
With each day wiser—but alas!
They that oppress me, my soul knows,
Would have my wisdom under grass.

XVI

If, by my death, the common cause
In any way might better plod,
To die like one condemned of laws
I'd damn myself, so help me God!
Young, old, above or under sod,
I've harmed no man; from its own place
No mountain moves to escape the rod
Of one poor fellow of the race.

XVII

Au temps que Alexandre regna,
Ung hom, nommé Diomedès,
Devant luy on luy amena,
Engrillonné poulces et detz
Comme ung larron; car il fut des
Escumeurs que voyons courir.
Si fut mys devant le cadès,
Pour estre jugé à mourir.

XVIII

L'empereur si l'arraisonna:
"Pourquoy es-tu larron de mer?"
L'autre responce luy donna:
"Pourquoy larron me faiz nommer?
"Pour ce qu'on me voit escumer
"En une petiote fuste?
"Se comme toy me peusse armer,
"Come toy empereur je fusse.

XIX

"Mais que veux-tu! De ma fortune,
"Contre qui ne puis bonnement,
"Qui si durement m'infortune,
"Me vient tout ce gouvernement.
"Excuse-moy aucunement,
"Et sçaches qu'en grand pauvreté
"(Ce mot dit-on communément)
"Ne gist pas trop grand loyaulté."

XVII

In time when Alexander reigned
A certain man, Diomedes,
Was brought before the dais, chained,
Aye, hand and foot and more than these,
As men bind robbers of the seas
Who skim before the zephyr's breath.
So there they thrust him on his knees
To hear himself condemned to death.

XVIII

The Emperor thus questioned him:
"Why art thou pirate of the sea?"
The other gave this answer trim:
"Why dost thou call me pirate—me?
Because one saw me sail, maybe,
My small craft and inferior?
So I could arm myself like thee,
Like thee should I be emperor.

XIX

"What would'st thou have? It is my lot,
Whereof I hold I'm innocent,
That so severely drives, God wot,
I bow beneath its government.
Pardon me not, impenitent,
But learn that under poverty
(The proverb's somewhat prevalent)
There lies but little decency."

XX

Quand l'empereur eut remiré
De Diomedès tout le dict:
"Ta fortune je te mueray,
"Mauvaise en bonne!" ce luy dit.
Si fist-il. Onc puis ne mesprit
A personne, mais fut vray homme;
Valère, pour vray, le rescript,
Qui fut nommé le grand *à Romme.*

XXI

Se Dieu m'eust donné rencontrer
Ung autre piteux Alexandre,
Qui m'eust faict en bon heur entrer,
Et lors qui m'eust veu condescendre
A mal, estre ars et mys en cendre
Jugé me fusse de ma voix.
Necessité faict gens mesprendre,
Et faim saillir le loup des boys.

XXII

Je plaings le temps de ma jeunesse,
Ouquel j'ay plus qu'autre gallé,
Jusque à l'entrée de vieillesse,
Qui son partement m'a celé.
Il ne s'en est à pied allé,
N'à cheval; las! et comment donc?
Soudainement s'en est vollé,
Et ne m'a laissé quelque don.

XX

Now while the King's surprise was great
To hear these words of Diomed:
"Thy fortunes I'll ameliorate,
Evil to good," he smiled and said.
And this being done, thereafter led
That man a blameless life at home,
As in Valerius I have read,
Called Maximus when Rome was Rome.

XXI

If God had given me to meet
Another Alexander here,
Who'd dowered me with leisure sweet
But seen me fall to sin, and veer,
Oh, then to burn to cinders drear
Myself had damned, with certitude.
Necessity makes men steal gear
And famine wolves to leave the wood.

XXII

I mourn the time when I was young,
When I was more than others gay!
Here at the door of age I'm flung;
Youth hid his flight till here I lay.
He went not walking from me, nay,
Nor riding. Oh alas, how then?
Suddenly soared on wings away,
He's left me to my tears again!

XXIII

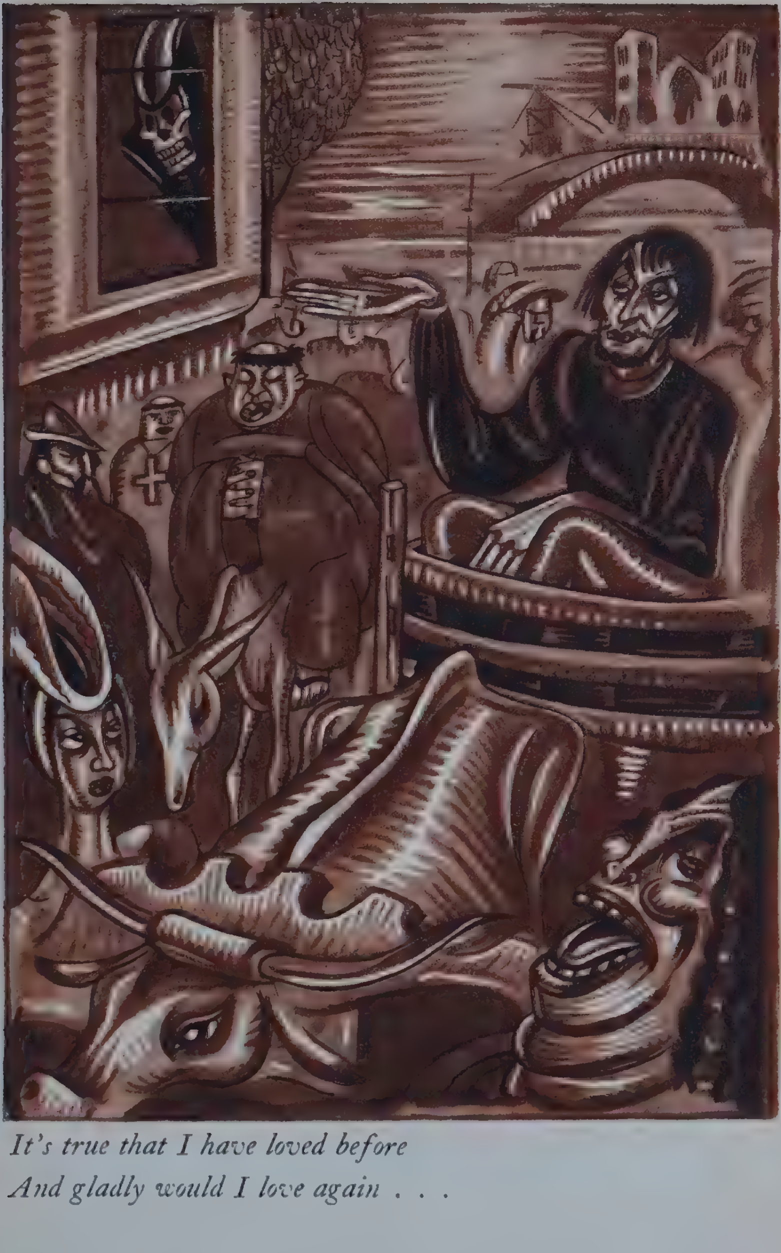
Allé s'en est, et je demeure,
Pauvre de sens et de sçavoir,
Triste, failly, plus noir que meure,
Qui n'ay ne cens, rente, n'avoir;
Des miens le moindre, je dy voir,
De me desadvouer s'avance,
Oublyans naturel devoir,
Par faulte d'un peu de chevance.

XXIV

Si ne crains avoir despendu,
Par friander et par leschier;
Par trop aimer n'ay riens vendu,
Que nuls me puissent reprouchier,
Au moins qui leur couste trop cher.
Je le dys, et ne croys mesdire.
De ce je me puis revencher:
Qui n'a meffait ne le doit dire.

XXV

Est vérité que j'ay aymé
Et que aymeroye voulontiers;
Mais triste cueur, ventre affamé,
Qui n'est rassasié au tiers,
Me oste des amoureux sentiers.
Au fort, quelqu'un s'en récompense,
Qui est remply sur les chantiers,
Car de la panse vient la danse.



It's true that I have loved before
And gladly would I love again . . .

XXIII

He's gone, I'm left, and no more merry;
Broken in body, drained in mind,
Bitter and bankrupt, black as a berry,
Nothing of lands nor rents I find;
While of my kin no soul is kind;
Each has disowned me, shown the door,
Forgetful of all ties that bind
Because—God help me!—I am poor.

XXIV

I take no blame for having spent
My wealth in wine or lechery;
Nor for much love I'm indigent;
There's none therein can censure me,
Save at his peril, grievously.
I say it and do not missay.
Herein I'll have revenge: you see,
Who's done no crime, no crime should pay.

XXV

It's true that I have loved before
And gladly would I love again;
But full heart, belly evermore
Not one third fed, all downfallen,
Forbid the amorous ways of men.
It is for him to find romance
Who's full of meat and wine, for then
The belly's pregnant of the dance.

XXVI

Bien sçay se j'eusse estudié
Ou du temps de ma jeunesse folle,
Et à bonnes meurs dedié,
J'eusse maison et couche molle!
Mais quoy? je fuyoye l'escolle,
Comme faict le mauvays enfant . . .
En escrivant ceste parolle,
A peu que le cueur ne me fend.

XXVII

Le dict du Saige trop le feiz
Favorable, et bien n'en puis mais,
Qui dit: "Esjoys-toy, mon filz,
A ton adolescence;" mais
Ailleurs sert bien d'ung autre mectz:
Car "Jeunesse et adolescence
(C'est son parler, ne moins ne mais)
Ne sont qu'abbus et ignorance."

XXVIII

Mes jours s'en sont allez errant,
Comme, dit Job, d'une touaille
Sont les filetz, quand tisserant
Tient en son poing ardente paille:
Lors, s'il y a nul bout qui saille,
Soudainement il le ravit.
Si ne crains rien qui plus m'assaille,
Car à la mort tout s'assouvyst.

XXVI

If I had studied, I know well,
When in my youth I played the fool,
And with the wise had learned to dwell,
I'd had a house and couch to rule.
But what did I? I fled from school
Like any lad who plays the rake . . .
In writing this, here on my stool,
A little and my heart will break.

XXVII

That word of Solomon the Sage,
I followed it too well, in sooth
(Yet how else might I at my age?):
"Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth."
For soon he serves another broth
(These are his words as taught to me,
No more nor less, and likewise truth):
"Childhood and youth are vanity."

XXVIII

My days being all at odds and ends,
As (Job says) when the cloth is spread
And over it the weaver bends
With burning straw to singe the thread,
Till, finding there no jutting shred,
Suddenly takes the flame away—
So no more errant ills I'll dread:
In death all debts are eased for aye.

XXIX

Où sont le gratieux gallans
Que je suyvoye au temps jadis,
Si bien chantans, si bien parlans,
Si plaisans en faictz et en dictz?
Les aucuns sont mortz et roydiz;
D'eulx n'est-il plus rien maintenant.
Respit ils ayent en paradis,
Et Dieu saulve le remenant!

XXX

Et les aucuns sont devenuz,
Dieu mercy! grans seigneurs et maistres;
Les autres mendient tout nudz,
Et pain ne voyent qu'aux fenestres;
Les autres sont entrés en cloistres
De Celestins et de Chartreux,
Bottez, housez, com pescheurs d'oystres,
Voilà l'estat divers d'entre eulx.

XXXI

Aux grans maistres Dieu doint bien faire,
Vivans en paix et en requoy.
En eulx il n'y a que refaire;
Si s'en fait bon taire tout quoy.
Mais aux pauvres qui n'ont de quoy,
Comme moy, Dieu doint patience;
Aux aultres ne fault qui ne quoy,
Car assez ont pain et pitance.

XXIX

Where are the gallant gentlemen
That I knew well in times gone by?
That spoke and sang so bravely, then,
In fact and fancy flown so high?
Well—some are dead, and stark they lie;
No word's to say, no requiem;
Peace they have gained of Heaven, and I—
O God, save thou the rest of them!

XXX

For some of them turned out to be—
God's mercy!—masters and great lords:
Some beg all nude and only see
Such bread as baker's window guards;
While some have entered cloisters, wards
Of Celestines, Carthusians too,
Dressed as their hoary trade accords.
Behold what different things men do.

XXXI

To great men God gives all that's good,
Living in peace and at their ease.
They've all they need for livelihood,
Wherefore they may keep silence, these.
But to the poor of all degrees
(Like me) God lend a patient heart;
With them no further gift agrees,
Who've bread and coin to play their part.

XXXII

Bons vins ont, souvent embrochez,
Saulces, brouetz et gros poissons;
Tartres, flans, œufs, fritz et pochez,
Perdus, et en toutes facons.
Pas ne ressemblant les maçons,
Qui servir fault à si grand peine;
Ils ne veulent nulz eschançons,
Car de verser chascun se peine.

XXXIII

En cest incident me suys mys,
Qui de rien ne sert à mon faict.
Je ne suys juge, ne commis,
Pour punyr n'absouldre meffaict.
De tous suys le plus imparfaict.
Loué soit le doulx Jesus-Christ!
Que par moy leur soit satisfaict!
Ce que j'ay escript est escript.

XXXIV

Laissons le monstier où il est;
Parlons de chose plus plaisante.
Ceste matière à tous ne plaist:
Ennuyeuse est et desplaisante.
Pauvreté, chagrine et dolente,
Tousjours despiteuse et rebelle,
Dit quelque parolle cuysante;
S'elle n'ose, si le pense-elle.

XXXII

They wash down roast meats with good wine,
Eat soups and sauces and stuffed fish,
Tarts, custards, fried eggs—aye, and dine
On eggs in every way they wish;
Not like poor masons, in whose dish
The food's been earned by toil and pain,
Served not when they are liquorish,
But each his own glass must maintain.

XXXIII

I find myself digressing here,
Which no way serves my interest.
I am no proper judge, austere,
To pain or pardon, as seems best.
I am of all men most unblest,
And—praised be Christ!—if I am smitten,
Let them have joy of my unrest!
What I have written, I have written.

XXXIV

But leave the poorhouse where it is,
And of more cheerful matters say;
Not all can well be pleased with this;
It's wearisome in every way.
Poverty, vexed and always grey,
Stern and rebellious, cold and hot,
Dares many words that pierce and flay,
Or thinks them if it dare them not.

XXXV

Pauvre je suys de ma jeunesse,
De pauvre et de petite extrace.
Mon père n'eut oncq grand richesse,
Ne son ayeul, nommé Erace.
Pauvreté tous nous suyt et trace.
Sur les tumbeaulx de mes ancestres
Les ames desquelz Dieu embrasse,
On n'y voyt couronnes ne sceptres.

XXXVI

De pouvreté me guermentant,
Souventes foys me dit le cueur
"Homme, ne te doulouse tant
Et ne demaine tel douleur;
Se tu n'as tant qu'eust Jacques Cueur,
Myeulx vault vivre soubz gros bureaux
Pauvre, qu'avoir esté seigneur
Et pourrir soubz riches tumbeaulx!"

XXXVII

Qu'avoir esté seigneur! . . . Que dys?
Seigneur, lasse! ne l'est-il mais!
Selon les Davidiques dicts,
Son lieu ne congnoistrai jamais.
Quant du surplus, je m'en desmectz,
Il n'appartient à moy, pecheur;
Aux theologiens le remectz,
Car c'est office de prescheur.

XXXV

Poor man am I, and that from youth,
Of poor folk and of humble place.
My father had no wealth, in sooth,
Nor his grandfather, named Erace.
Poverty dogs our step and trace.
Upon the tombs of my forebears
(The souls of whom may God embrace)
One sees no crowns and no sceptres.

XXXVI

When mourning that my lot is such,
How many times my heart has said:
"Man, thou lamentest overmuch
Thy days and morrows on thy bed.
Though not as Jacques Coeur thou hast fed,
Better in rags to keep this room
Than to have been a lord, and dead
And rotting, have a splendid tomb!"

XXXVII

Than to have been a lord! What say?
A lord, ah, he's no more of men!
As sings the Psalmist in the lay,
His place shall not be known again.
As for the rest, I cry amen,
It's naught to sinful me; at least
To theologians be it then:
It is the business of the priest.

XXXVIII

Si ne suys, bien le considère,
Filz d'ange, portant dyadème
D'etoille ne d'autre sydère.
Mon père est mort, Dieu en ayt l'ame;
Quant est du corps, il gyst soubz lame . . .
J'entends que ma mère mourra,
Et le sçait bien, la pauvre femme;
Et le filz pas ne demourra.

XXXIX

Je congnoys que pauvres et riches,
Sages et folz, prebstres et laiz,
Noble et vilain, larges et chiches,
Petitz et grans, et beaulx et laidz,
Dames à rebrassez colletz,
De quelconque condicion,
Portant attours et bourreletz,
Mort saisit sans exception.

XL

Et mourut Paris ou Helène,
Quiconques meurt, meurt à douleur.
Celluy qui perd vent et alaine,
Son fiel se crève sur son cueur,
Puys sue Dieu sçait quelle sueur!
Et n'est qui de ses maulx l'allège:
Car enfans n'a, frère ne sœur,
Qui lors voulsist estre son pleige.

XXXVIII

Thus I am not, considering well,
An angel's son, that wears on poll
A diadem of stars to tell.
My father's dead, God have his soul!
His bones are thrust into a hole.
I know my mother too shall die,
And well she knows the grave's her goal,
Poor woman. Even so shall I.

XXXIX

I know this well, that rich and poor,
Fools, sages, laymen, friars in cowl,
Large-hearted lords and each mean boor,
Little and great and fair and foul,
Ladies in lace, who smile or scowl,
From whatsoever stock they stem,
Hatted or hooded, prone to prowl,
Death seizes every one of them.

XL

And Paris dying, or Helen, still
Who dies, dies wretchedly and apart.
Whoever loses breath and will,
The black gall breaks upon his heart;
He sweats—God knows how sweat will start!—
Nor gains aid as his eyes grow dim:
Child, brother, none will play the part
Of hostage in death's hands for him.

XLI

La mort le faict fremir, pallir,
Le nez courber, les veines tendre,
Le col enfler, la chair mollir,
Joinctes et nerfs croistre et estendre.
Corps feminin, qui tant est tendre,
Polly, souef, si precieulx,
Te fauldra-il ces maulx attendre?
Ouy, ou tout vif aller ès cieulx.

XLI

Death makes him shudder and turn pale,
Pinches his nose, distends his veins,
Swells out his throat, his members fail,
Tendons and nerves grow hard with strains.
O female flesh, like silken skeins,
Smooth, tender, precious, in such wise
Must you endure so awful pains?
Aye, or go living to the skies.

BALLADE DES DAMES DU TEMPS JADIS

Dictes-moy ou, n'en quel pays,
Est Flora, la belle Romaine;
Archipiada, ne Thaïs,
Qui fut sa cousine germaine;
Echo, parlant quand bruyt on maine
Dessus rivière ou sus estan,
Qui beauté eut trop plus qu'humaine?
Mais ou sont les neiges d'antan!

Où est la très sage Heloïs,
Pour qui fut chastré et puis moyne
Pierre Esbaillart à Sainct-Denys?
Pour son amour eut cest essoyne.
Semblablement, où est la royne
Qui commanda que Buridan
Fust jetté en ung sac en Seine?
Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?

BALLADE OF LADIES OF TIMES GONE BY

Say where, not in what land, may be
Flora the Roman? Where remain
Fair Archippa's charms, and she—
Thais—in beauty so germane?
Echo, calling afar, in vain,
Over the rivers and marshes wan,
Lovelier once than girls profane?
But where are the snows of last year gone?

Where's Heloïse, that learn'd lady
For whom was gelded—priestly gain!—
Pierre Abelard at Saint Denis?
For love he bore such weight of pain.
And where's the Queen who did ordain
And give command that Buridan
Be sewed in a sack and flung to Seine?
But where are the snows of last year gone?

La royne Blanche comme ung lys.
Qui chantoit à voix de sereine,
Berthe au grand pied, Bietris, Allys;
Harembourges, qui tient le Mayne,
Et Jehanne, la bonne Lorraine,
Qu'Anglois bruslèrent à Rouen;
Où sont-ils, Vierge souveraine? . . .
Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?

ENVOI

Prince, n'enquerez de sepmaine
Où elles sont, ne de cest an,
Que ce refrain ne vous remaine:
Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?

Queen Blanche, white as a fleur-de-lis,
Who sang in a voice of siren strain;
Beatrice, Bertha, Alice, three,
And Ermengarde who ruled in Maine;
And that brave Joan, Maid of Lorraine,
Burned by the English at Rouen—
Where are they, Virginal Suzerain?
But where are the snows of last year gone?

ENVOI

Prince, to ask of this week, abstain,
Nor seek to learn of this year, anon,
That this refrain may not remain:
But where are the snows of last year gone?

BALLADE DES SEIGNEURS DU TEMPS JADIS

Suyvant le propos précédent

Qui plus? Où est le tiers Calixte,
Dernier decedé de ce nom,
Qui quatre ans tint le Papaliste?
Alphonse, le roy d'Aragon,
Le gracieux duc de Bourbon,
Et Artus, le duc de Bretaigne,
Et Charles septiesme, le Bon? . . .
Mais où est la preux Charlemagne?

Semblablement, le roy Scotiste,
Qui demy-face eut, ce dit-on,
Vermeille comme une amathiste
Depuys le front jusqu'au menton?
Le roy de Chypre de renom;
Helas! et le bon roy d'Espaigne,
Duquel pe ne sçay pas le nom? . . .
Mais où est le preux Charlemagne?

BALLADE OF LORDS OF TIMES GONE BY

Pursuant to the Preceding

Where's he by death so lately kissed —
The Third Calixtus, where's he gone,
Who four years ruled the papalist?
Alphonso, King of Aragon,
His Grace the good Duke of Bourbon,
And that Duke Arthur of Bretagne,
And Charles the Good, the seventh one?
But where is the mighty Charlemagne?

Likewise that King of Scottish mist,
Whose face, they say, was one-half grown
Vermilion as an amethyst
Forehead to chin beneath his crown?
That King of Cyprus of renown,
Alas, and that good King of Spain
Whose name remains to me unknown?
But where is the mighty Charlemagne?

D'en plus parler je me désiste;
Ce n'est que toute abusion.
Il n'est qui contre mort resiste,
Ne qui treuve provision.
Encor fais une question:
Lancelot, le roy de Behaigne,
Où est-il? Où est son tayon? . . .
Mais où est le preux Charlemagne.

ENVOI

Où est Claquin le bon Breton?
Où le compte Daulphin d'Auvergne,
Et le bon feu duc d'Alençon? . . .
Mais où est le preux Charlemagne!

I say no more now, I desist;
The case is ill to rest upon;
He lives not who may death resist
With brief and with criterion.
Yet one more question let me con:
Ladislas of Bohemian reign,
Where's he, and those he called his own?
But where is the mighty Charlemagne?

ENVOI

Where's Du Guesclin, the brave Breton?
Where's Auvergne's Dauphin? And again
The late good Duke of Alençon?
But where is the mighty Charlemagne?

BALLADE

A ce propos en vieil François.

Mais où sont ly sainctz apostoles,
D'aulbes vestuz, d'amys coeffez,
Qui sont ceincts de sainctes estoles,
Dont par le col prent ly mauffez,
De maltalent tout eschauffez!
Aussi bien meurt filz que servans;
De ceste vie sont bouffez:
Autant en emporte ly vens.

Voire, où sont de Constantinobles
L'emperier aux poings dorez,
Ou de France ly roy tresnobles,
Sur tous autres roys decorez,
Qui, pour ly grand Dieu adorez,
Bastist eglises et convens?
S'en son temps il fut honorez,
Autant en emporte ly vens.

BALLADE

On the Foregoing Theme, Which Villon Made in Ancient French

But where are all the saintly souls
That alb and amice wore threadbare,
Who, by their consecrated stoles,
Could hang the Fiend as in a snare
(All reckless of his might), and share
The death of Him to whom we pray?
Out of this life they went like air.
So much carries the wind away.

Where the Byzantine lord whose roles
Men limned with golden hands? And where
That King of France the world extols
Beyond all other kings for prayer,
Who, for the love of God, built rare
Cathedrals, churches, convents? Say!
Though in their times their fames were fair,
So much carries the wind away.

Où sont de Vienne et de Grenobles
Ly Daulphin, ly preux, ly senez?
Où, de Dijon, Sallins et Dolles,
Ly sires et ly filz aisnez?
Où autant de leurs gens privez,
Heraulx, trompettes, poursuyvans?
Ont-ilz bien bouté soubz le nez? . . .
Autant en emporte ly vens.

ENVOI

Princes à mort sont destinez,
Et tous autres qui sont vivans;
S'ils en sont coursez ou tennez,
Autant en emporte ly vens.

XLII

Puys que papes, roys, filz de roys,
Et conceuz en ventres de roynes,
Sont enseveliz, mortz et froidz,
En aultruy mains passent leurs resnes;
Moy pauvre mercerot de Renes,
Mourray-je pas? Ouy, se Dieu plaist;
Mais que j'aye faict mes estrenes,
Honneste mort ne me desplaist.

XLIII

Ce monde n'est perpetuel,
Quoy que pense riche pillart;
Tous sommes soubz coutel mortel.
Ce confort prent pauvre vieillart,

Grenoble, Vienne—what heart condoles
For the great Dauphin who lived there?
In Dôle, Dijon, Salins, who trolls,
To feudal sire or feudal heir?
Where are their men-at-arms and their
Heralds and trumpeters today?
At bed and board how do they fare?
So much carries the wind away.

ENVOI

Princes for death must all prepare,
As all men else who toil or play.
Be it to burden or to bear,
So much carries the wind away.

XLII

Since popes and kings and sons of kings,
Conceived and born of royal wombs,
Are buried and but senseless things,
While others ruffle in their rooms,
Poor rogue of Rennes, to miss the tombs
Shall I not die? Aye, when God please.
Yet, so I have my waving plumes,
A good death hurts not my heart's ease.

XLIII

This world is not perpetual,
Whatever these rich robbers think;
The sword hangs over each and all.
Comfort of this may that man drink

Lequel d'estre plaisant raillart
Eut le bruyt, lorsque jeune estoit,
Qu'on tiendroit à fol et paillart,
Se, vieil, à railler se mettoit.

XLIV

Or luy convient-il mendier,
Car à ce force le contraint.
Regrette huy sa mort, et hier;
Tristesse son cueur si estrainct,
Souvent, se n'estoit Dieu qu'il crainct,
Il feroit un horrible faict.
Et advient qu'en ce Dieu enfrainct,
Et que luy-mesmes se deffaict.

XLV

Car, s'en jeunesse il fut plaisant,
Ores plus rien ne dit qui plaise.
Tousjours vieil synge est desplaisant:
Moue ne faict qui ne desplaise.
S'il se taist, affin qu'il complaise,
Il est tenu pour fol recreu.
S'il parle, on luy dit qu'il se taise,
Et qu'en son prunier n'a pas creu.

XLVI

Aussi, ces pauvres femmelettes,
Qui vieilles sont et n'ont de quoy,
Quand voyent jeunes pucelettes
Estre en aise et en requoy,

Whose festive wit, in words or ink,
Was noised abroad when he was young;
Who were fool now, whose jests would stink,
So, old, he joked with pen or tongue.

XLIV

Now it becomes him well to beg,
Compelled thereto by fears of death,
Which never for an instant lag;
Sadness of heart so fills his breath
That but for God's law underneath
He'd do that desperate deed he hides.
Nay, often, in despite of faith,
Such poor old men turn suicides.

XLV

Though in his youth he made good cheer,
Henceforth no thing he says will please.
Always the old ape's eyes are blear,
The mouths he makes are like disease.
If into silence then he flees,
He's held worn-out, a walking ghost;
And if he speaks, one bids him cease,
An empty plum-tree nipped by frost.

XLVI

So too it is with poor old blabs,
Who are grown grey and have no rest
For watching all the fair young drabs
Living at ease and in request.

Lors demandent à Dieu pourquoy
Si tost nasquirent, n'à quel droit?
Notre Seigneur s'en taist tout coy
Car, au tanser, il le perdroit.

Then they demand of God what jest
So soon conceived them, and what right?
The good Lord makes no answer, lest
Their female logic win the fight.

LES REGRETS DE LA BELLE HEAULMIÉRE

Jà parvenue à vieillesse

Advis m'est que j'oy regretter
La belle qui fut heaulimière,
Soy jeune fille souhaitter
Et parler en ceste manière:
"Ha! vieillesse felonne et fière,
Pourquoy m'as si tost abatue?
Qui me tient que je ne fière,
Et qu'à ce coup je ne me tue?

"Tollu m'as ma haulte franchise
Que beauté m'avoit ordonné
Sur clercz, marchans et gens d'Eglise;
Car alors n'estoit homme né
Qui tout le sien ne m'eust donné,
Quoy qu'il en fust des repentailles,
Mais que luy eusse abandonné
Ce que reffussent truandailles.

THE REGRETS OF THE FAIR ADVENTURESS OVERCOME BY AGE

I think I hear one voice her ire
(The one that was adventuress);
To be a girl is her desire,
After this fashion, humorless:
"Ha! fierce, felonious age, confess
Why thou so soon must override
And hold me in such strain and stress
I dare not turn to suicide?

"Thou hast repealed the right I had,
By beauty given, in beauty worn,
To scholars, merchants, churchmen glad;
No man in those days, woman-born,
But gave his all to help adorn
This flesh (nor thought to rue it then),
So I abandoned, night and morn,
What's now refused by beggar-men.

"A maint homme l'ay reffusé,
Qui n'estoit à moy grand saigesse,
Pour l'amour d'ung garson rusé,
Auquel j'en feiz grande largesse.
A qui que je feisse finesse,
Par m'ame, je l'amoye bien!
Or ne me faisoit que rudesse,
Et ne m'amoyt que pour le mien.

"Jà ne me sceut tant detrayner,
Fouller au piedz, que ne l'aymasse,
Et m'eust-il faict les rains trayner,
S'il m'eust dit que je le baisasse
Et que tous mes maux oubliasse;
Le glouton, de mal entaché,
M'embrassoit . . . J'en suis bien plus grasse!
Que m'en reste-il? Honte et péché.

"Or il est mort, passé trente ans,
Et je remains vieille et chenue.
Quand je pense, lasse! au bon temps,
Quelle fus, quelle devenue;
Quand me regarde toute nue,
Et je me voy si très-changée,
Pauvre, seiche, maigre, menue,
Je suis presque toute enragée.

"And I refused full many a man,
So little sense did I possess,
For love of one sly hooligan
Who lived at ease in my largess.
I fondled others, I confess,
But by my soul, I gave him love!
He wrought me only wretchedness
But liked my earnings well enough.

"Bound as I was, I never stood
To escape those trampling feet of his;
And had he made me trundle wood,
So it was asked me with a kiss,
I had forgotten all for bliss
(Oh, glutton, evil-soaked within!)
Of his embrace. I fed on this!
And now what's left me? Shame and sin!

"He's dead now, more than thirty years;
I live on in decrepitude.
But when I think—alas, with tears!—
Of all the good times gone, and brood,
When I regard myself all nude
And see this body changed and sad,
Poor, flabby, fallen, mean and rude,
Oh, then I think I must go mad!

"Qu'est devenu ce front poly,
Ces cheveulx blonds, sourcilz voultyz,
Grand entr'œil, le regard joly,
Dont prenoye les plus subtilz;
Ce beau nez droit, grand ne petiz;
Ces petites joinctes oreilles,
Menton fourchu, cler vis traictis,
Et ces belles lèvres vermeilles?

"Ces gentes espaules menues,
Ces bras longs et ces mains tretisses;
Petitz tetins, hanches charnues,
Eslevées, propres, faictisses
A tenir armoureuses lysses;
Ces larges reins, ce sadinet
Assis sur grosses fermes cuysses,
Dedans son joly jardinet?

"Le front ridé, les cheveulx gris,
Les sourcilz cheuz, les yeulx estainctz;
Qui faisoient regars et riz;
Dont maintz marchans furent attaincts
Nez courbé, de beauté loingtains;
Oreilles pendans et moussues;
Le vis pally, mort et destaincts;
Menton foncé, lèvres peaussues.

"Where are they gone, that forehead fair,
Those golden curls and curving brows;
The wide eyes with their wondering stare,
Wherein were subtly caught men's vows;
The nose, not less than love allows
Nor more; the close-set delicate ears;
Chin dimpled, cheeks like joy's own house;
And full red lips of younger years?

"The shoulders slim and gently bred,
The slender arms and tapering hands;
Little pink nipples, haunches fed
To such broad height as youth expands,
Able to meet all love's demands;
The deep flanks, and that heart's desire
Set between thick firm thighs, as stands
A garden where all griefs expire.

"Now—forehead seamed, locks grey like chaff,
Brows broken, eyes red-rimmed with rain—
Who looks at me now looks to laugh,
Where many a merchant paid to gain;
Nose like a beak, its beauty slain;
Ears lopped and grown with moss-like hair;
Face pale like death and sharp like pain;
Chin fallen, furred lips no more fair.

"C'est d'humaine beauté l'yssues!
Les bras courts et les mains contraictes,
Les espaulles toutes bossues;
Mammelles, quoi; toutes retraictes;
Telles les hanches que les tettes.
Du sadinet, fy! Quant des cuysses,
Cuysses ne sont plus, mais cuyssettes
Grivelées comme saulcisses.

"Ainsi le bon temps regrettons
Entre nous, pauvres vieilles sottes,
Assises bas, à croppetons,
Tout en ung tas comme pelottes,
A petit feu de chenevottes,
Tost allumées, tost estainctes;
Et jadis fusmes si mignottes! . . .
Ainsi en prend à maintz et maintes."

"So passes human loveliness!
Arms drawn, hands gnarled like root or bough,
The shoulders hunched and lustreless,
The breasts—but what? all ruined now;
Buttocks are flat like bubbies; how
Of heart's desire?—ah me!—and thighs?
They are no longer thighs, I vow,
But more like sausage flecked of flies.

"And thus the good times we regret
Between us, poor old foolish trots;
Here on our heels we fume and fret,
All in a crowd, like idiots;
A little fire of hemp faggots,
Soon kindled, soon extinguished—we
That were so sweet as young cocottes!
So runs the world, eternally."

BALLADE DE LA BELLE HEAULMIÉRE

Aux filles de Joie

"Or y pensez, belle Gantière,
Qui m'escolière souliez estre,
Et vous, Blanche la Savatière,
Ores est temps de vous congnoistre
Prenez à dextre et à senestre;
N'espargnez homme, je vous prie:
Car vieilles n'ont ne cours ne estre,
Ne que monnoye qu'on descrie.

"Et vous, la gente Saulcissière,
Qui de dancer estes adextre;
Guillemette la Tapissière,
Ne mesprenez vers vostre maistre;
Tous vous fauldra clorre fenestre,
Quand deviendrez vieille, flestrie;
Plus ne servirez qu'un vieil prebstre,
Ne que monnoye qu'on descrie.

"Jehanneton la Chaperonnière,
Gardez qu'ennuy ne vous empestre;
Katherine la Bouchière,
N'envoyez plus les hommes paistre:

BALLADE OF THE FAIR ADVENTURESS TO THE DAUGHTERS OF JOY

Come now, take thought, glove-maker fair,
To whom I taught what things are wise,
And you, Blanche, cobbling shoes to wear,
Hereafter you must realize
That right or left, in every guise,
Take each man's love who pays for it,
Since age brings woman pride and prize
No more than coin that's counterfeit.

And you who peddle sausage there,
Slim dancer on so dexterous thighs,
And Wilmette, arras-maker, spare
To flout your master's merchandise:
That shop shuts window where none buys,
And when you're withered, then your wit
Will serve, as no old priest denies,
No more than coin that's counterfeit.

Jenny the milliner, take care
You be not bound in tender ties;
Kate of the spur trade, no more dare
Drive men away whom you despise;

Car qui belle n'est, ne perpetre
Leur bonne grace, mais leur rie.
Laide vieillesse amour n'impetre,
Ne que monnoye qu'on descrie.

ENVOI

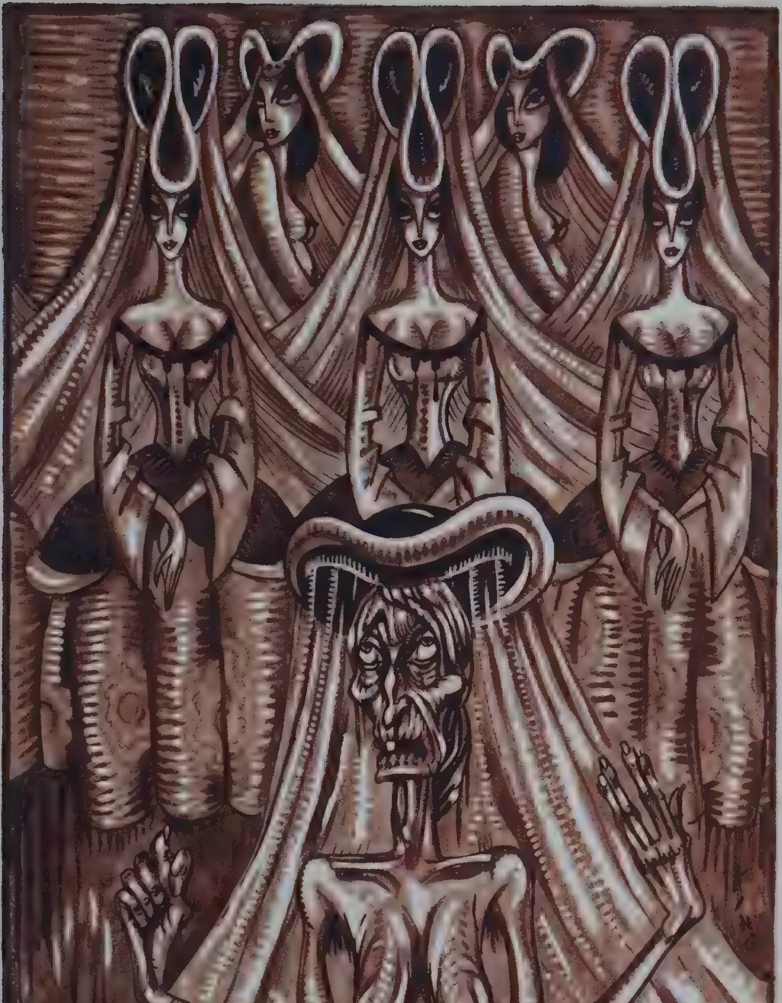
"Filles, veuillez vous entremettre
D'escouter pourquoy pleure et crie;
C'est pour ce que ne me puys mettre,
Ne que monnoye qu'on descrie."

XLVII

Ceste leçon icy leur baille
La belle et bonne de jadis;
Bien dit ou mal, vaille que vaille,
Enregistrer j'ay faict ces ditz
Par mon clerc Fremin l'estourdys,
Aussi rassis que je pense estre . . .
S'il me desment, je le mauldys:
Selon le clerc est deu le maistre.

XLVIII

Si aperçoy le grand danger
Là où l'homme amoureux se boute . . .
Hé! qui me vouldroit laidanger
De ce mot, en disant: "Escoute!
Se d'aymer t'estrange et reboute
Le barat de celles nommées,
Tu fais une bien folle doubte,
Car se sont femmes diffamées.



"Girls, would you learn why these two eyes
Are teemed with tears . . . ?"

With foul flesh no man gladly lies,
But all men cheat and twig and twit,
Or leave, when their lust's ardor dies,
No more than coin that's counterfeit.

ENVOI

Girls, would you learn why these two eyes
Are teemed with tears as here I sit?
Because I saved, of all love's sighs,
No more than coin that's counterfeit.

XLVII

Such are the words I hear her say,
Who was the toasted belle of old.
Well said or ill, and come what may,
I've had it all set forth, as told,
By my clerk Fremin, giddy-polled,
Yet sober as I think to be . . .
If he misquote, may he be sold!
Like man, like master, verily.

XLVIII

Thus I perceive what dangers frown
Where every lovesick man must go . . .
Ha! There are those will cry me down
For that line, saying: "Hearken O!
If thought of love deter you so,
Because of tricks in these you name,
You rail unjustly, since you know
That these are women of ill fame.

XLIX

"S'ils n'ayment fors que pour l'argent,
On ne les ayme que pour l'heure.
Rondement ayment toute gent,
Et rient lors quand bourse pleure.
De celles-ci n'est qui ne queurre;
Mais en femmes d'honneur et nom
Franc homme, se Dieu me sequeure,
Se doit employer; ailleurs, non."

L

Je prens qu'aucun dye cecy,
Si ne me contente-il en rien.
En effect, je concludz ainsy,
Et sy le cuyde entendre bien,
Qu'on doit aymer en lieu de bien,
Asçavoir-mon se ces fillettes,
Qu'en parolles longuement tien,
Ne furent pas femmes honnestes?

LI

Honnestes, si furent vrayement,
Sans avoir reproches ne blasmes.
S'il est vray que, au commencement,
Une chascune de ces femmes
Lors prindrent, ains qu'eussent diffames,
L'une ung clerc, ung lay, l'autre ung moine,
Pour estaindre d'amours les flammes,
Plus chauldes que feu Sainct-Antoine.

XLIX

“Since they love not except for gain,
One loves them not save for the hour.
Merry until the purses wane,
They lie with all the world in bower.
There’s none that seeks not gold or power;
But honest women, of good name,
Give love and labor and their dower.
God knows these others give but shame.”

L

I hold that if one reason thus,
He makes no cause for quarrel with me.
One must admit the obvious,
And love where it is well to be.
It but remains to seek and see
Whether those girls (or I’m a dunce),
Of whom I speak so lengthily—
Were they not honest women, once?

LI

Honest they were and truly so,
Without reproach or any blame,
So it be true that, long ago,
Each of these women of ill fame
Took, then, but not in open shame,
Clerk, layman, monk of her desire,
To quench in nature’s loves a flame
More ardent than Saint Anthony’s fire.

LII

Or firent selon le decret
Leurs amys, et bien y appert:
Elles aymoient en lieu secret,
Car autre qu'eulx n'y avoit part.
Toutesfois, ceste amour se part:
Car celle qui n'en avoit qu'un
D'icelluy s'eslongne et despart,
Et ayme myeulx aymer chascun.

LIII

Qui les meut à ce? J'imagine,
Sans l'honneur des dames blasmer,
Que c'est nature feminine,
Qui tout homme vouldroit aymer.
Autre chose ny scay rymer;
Fors qu'on dit, à Reims et à Troyes,
Voire à l'Isle et à Sainct-Omer,
Que six ouvriers font plus que troys.

LIV

Or ont les fols amans le bond,
Et les dames prins la vollée;
C'est le droit loyer qu'amours ont;
Toute foy y est violée,
Quelque doulx baiser n'acollée.
De chiens, d'oyseaulx, d'armes, d'amours,,
Chascun le dit à la vollée:
"Pour ung plaisir mille douleurs."

LII

Now, in accord with nature's laws
(This is well known of jade or bride),
They met in secret ways, because
Love is a horse but two may ride.
But then, as always, such love died;
And she that all for one began,
Tiring of him she lay beside,
Loved better to love every man.

LIII

What moves them to it? As I think
(Not finding fault with woman's worth),
It's in the female blood to swink
And sweat for all men over earth.
No reason else will rhyme henceforth,
Except, as Rheims and Troyes agree—
Lille, Saint Omer—not all in mirth—
Six workmen do more work than three.

LIV

Love's fools must labor as they leap,
While ladies take to easy flight;
This one law is a law we keep,
Though faith lies broken, left and right.
No kiss but sweeter kiss will blight.
With dogs, birds, arms and love this goes
(And so they say of all delight):
"For every joy a thousand woes."

DOUBLE BALLADE

Sur Le Même Propos

Pour ce, aymez tant que vouldrez,
Suyvez assemblées et festes,
En la fin jà mieulx n'en vauldrez,
Et sy n'y romprez que vos testes:
Folles amours font les gens bestes:
Salmon en idolatrya:
Samson en perdit ses lunettes . . .
Bien heureux est qui rien n'y a!

Orpheus, le doux menestrier,
Jouant de flustes et musettes,
En fut en dangier du meurtrier
Grand chien Cerberus à troys testes;
Et Narcissus, le bel honnestes,
En ung profond puys se noya,
Pour l'amour de ses amourettes . . .
Bien heureux est qui rien n'y a!

DOUBLE BALLADE

ON THE SAME SUBJECT

Love as you will and all you will,
Haunt gatherings which increase your debt,
In the end you'll have no purse to fill,
But broken heads and hard regret.
Light love turns man to marmoset,
As Solomon to idols turned,
While Samson's eyes are missing yet . . .
Lucky is he who's not concerned!

Orpheus, with his wild sweet skill
At pipe and flute and flageolet,
Fell likewise into great peril
Of Cerberus in oubliette.
Narcissus, that fine lad, who set
His image in a pool and yearned
So much therefor he died all wet . . .
Lucky is he who's not concerned!

Sardana, le preux chevalier,
Qui conquist le regne de Crètes,
En voult devenir moulier
Et filer entre pucellettes.
David ly roy, saige prophètes,
Craincte de Dieu en oublya,
Voyant laver cuisses bien faictes . . .
Bien heureux est qui rien n'y a!

Ammon en voult deshonnòrer,
Feignant de manger tartelettes,
Sa sœur Thamar, et deflorer,
Qui fist choses moult deshonnestes;
Herodes (pas ne sont sornettes)
Sainct Jehan-Baptiste en decolla,
Pour dances, saultz et chansonnettes . . .
Bien heureux est qui rien n'y a!

De moy, pauvre, je veuil parler;
J'en fuz batu, comme à ru telles,
Tout nud, ja ne le quiers celer.
Qui me feit mascher ces groiselles,
Fors Katherine de Vauselles?
Noé le tiers ot, qui fut là.
Mitaines à ces nopces telles . . .
Bien heureux est qui rien n'y a!

Sardana, that brave knight whose drill
Conquered the crown of Crete—he let
His body into frock and frill
To spin with many a fair coquette.
David the King, that wise prophet,
The fear of God forgot or spurned
For white thighs he could not forget . . .
Lucky is he who's not concerned!

Amnon, who feigned that he was ill
And hungry for an omelet,
Deflowered his sister for the thrill
Of Tamar in a tester met.
Herod (no lies I here abet)
Saint John the Baptist's head inurned,
For dance and song and summerset . . .
Lucky is he who's not concerned!

For me, poor fool, I've paid the bill
And fled away all nude, beset
With blows, like linen at a rill.
Who fed me full on his diet
But Kate de Vaucelles, my old pet?
A third part Noah got, and learned
The gloves they wore were not velvet . . .
Lucky is he who's not concerned!

Mais que ce jeune bachelier
Laissast ces jeunes bachelettes,
Non! et, le deust-on vif brusler,
Come ung chevaucheur d'escovettes.
Plus doulces luy sont que civettes;
Mais toutesfoys fol s'y fia:
Soient blanches, soient brunettes,
Bien heureux est qui rien n'y a!

LV

Si celle que jadis servoye
De si bon cueur et loyaument,
Dont tant de maulx et griefz j'avoye,
Et souffroye tant de tourment,
Se dit m'eust, au commencement,
Sa voulenté (mais nenny, las!),
J'eusse mys peine aucunement,
De moy retraire de ses las.

LVI

Quoy que je luy voulsisse dire,
Elle estoit preste d'escouter,
Sans m'accorder ne contredire;
Qui plus, me souffroit arrester,
Joignant elle près m'accouter;
Et ainsi m'alloit amusant,
Et me souffroit tout racompter,
Mais ce n'estoit qu'en m'abusant.

But Pierrot—can tongue or quill
Entice him from his Pierrette?
No! Though you roast him on a hill,
Like witch or wizard foul as jet.
He finds her sweeter than civet,
But rues it when his nose is burned:
Whether fair blonde or fair brunette,
Lucky is he who's not concerned!

LV

If she I served in other days,
With so good heart and loyalty,
Whereof I came by woeful ways
And sang so long a monody—
If she had told her policy
When first I loved (but no, indeed!),
I had thrown down her tyranny
And been a man now at my need.

LVI

Whatever thing I said to her,
To that thing she lent eager ear,
Without assent, without demur;
Nay, more, when talk would halt or veer,
She'd hang upon my arm, so near,
And thus amused perfidiously,
She'd draw from me what most was dear,
The better to abandon me.

LVII

Abusé m'a, et faicet entendre
Tousjours d'ung que ce fust ung aultre;
De farine, que ce fust cendre;
D'ung mortier, ung chapeau de feature;
De vieil machefer, que fust peaultre;
D'ambesas, que ce fussent ternes . . .
Toujours trompant ou moy ou aultre,
Et vendoit vessies pour lanternes.

LVIII

Du ciel, une poisle d'arain;
Des nues, une peau de veau;
Du matin, qu'estoit le serain;
D'un trongnon de chou, ung naveau;
D'orde cervoise, vin nouveau;
D'une truie, une molin à vent;
Et d'une hart, ung escheveau;
D'un gras abbé, ung poursuyvant.

LIX

Ainsi m'ont amours abusé,
Et pourmené de l'huys au pesle,
Je croy qu'homme n'est si rusé,
Fust fin comme argent de coupelle,
Qui n'y laissast linge et drapelle,
Mais qu'il fust ainsi manyé
Comme moy, qui partout m'appelle
L'amant remys et renyé.

LVII

Aye, she abused me till I thought
That one thing was another; aye,
That flour was ashes, and so wrought
Flat caps to felt hats, and would die
To prove that slag was black old rye,
And ambsace was the throw called tern;
Always the cheat, she'd had me buy
Bladders and think them lamps to burn!

LVIII

I thought the sky a brazen bowl;
The clouds I thought were peel of veal;
The morning evening—on my soul!
A cabbage-core a turnip-heel;
Foul beer I thought new wine and real;
A sow a windmill; and I swear
A halter seemed like silk to feel,
And a fat monk a messenger.

LIX

Thus love has fooled me to the eyes
And led from frying-pan to fire.
I think no man, however wise
And finely drawn as silver wire,
But must have left his goods entire
(Had he been used as I) to hide,
Hearing this name swelled high and higher:
The lover jilted and denied.

LX

Je renye Amours et despite,
Et deffie à feu et à sang.
Mort par elles me precipite,
Et ne leur en chault pas d'ung blanc.
Ma vielle ay mys soubz le banc;
Amans je ne suyvray jamais;
Se jadis je fuz de leur ranc,
Je declaire que n'en suys mais.

LXI

Car j'ay mys le plumail au vent:
Or le suyve qui a attente;
De ce me tays dorenevant.
Poursuyvre je vueil mon entente,
Et, s'aucun m'interroge ou tente
Comment d'amours ose mesdire,
Ceste parolle les contente:
"Qui meurt a ses loix de tout dire."

LXII

Je cognoys approcher ma soef;
Je crache, blanc comme cotton,
Jacobins gros comme ung estoef:
Qu'est-ce à dire? que Jehanneton
Plus ne me tient pour valeton,
Mais pour un vieil usé regnart . . .
De vieil porte voix et le ton,
Et ne suys qu'ung jeune coquart.

LX

I will quit women, by my faith,
With fire and sword this war shall be.
By them I find myself near death,
Nor one to care a cent for me.
I've hung my harp on a willow tree;
I'll never serve as I served then;
And where I once went joyously,
I swear I'll never go again!

LXI

My flag is flown upon the wind;
Let him serve on who gains consent;
No more on love my hopes are pinned;
Henceforth I'll follow my own bent.
And if one ask why I foment
Trouble and dare this rage to wreak,
Let him recall, and be content:
"Who's doomed to die has leave to speak."

LXII

I feel the thirst of mortal dust;
I cough and, coughing, I spit white;
Phlegms big as balls my eyes disgust.
What's more to say? That Jenny's right:
I cannot serve her, day or night,
Nay, rather, I'm a worn-out shell,
Voice gone and body in this plight—
Yet I'm in years a cockerel.

LXIII

Dieu mercy et Jaques Thibault,
Qui tant d'eau froide m'a faict boyre,
En ung bas lieu, non pas en hault;
Manger d'angoisse mainte poire;
Enferré . . . Quand j'en ay memoire,
Je pry pour luy et reliqua,
Que Dieu luy doint . . . et voire, voire,
Ce que je pense . . . et cetera.

LXIV

Toutesfoys, je n'y pense mal,
Pour luy et pour son lieutenant;
Aussy pour son official,
Qui est plaisant et advenant,
Que faire n'ay du remenant;
Mais du petit maistre Robert? . . .
Je les ayme, tout d'un tenant,
Ainsi que faict Dieu le Lombart.

LXV

Si me souvient, à mon advis,
Que je feis, à mon partement,
Çertains lays, l'an cinquante six,
Qu'aucuns, sans mon consentement,
Voulurent nommer Testament;
Leur plaisir fut, et non le mien:
Mais quoy! on dit communement,
Qu'un chascun n'est maistre du sien.

LXIII

God's will and that of James Thibaut!
Who made me drink beyond my need
Of water in a dungeon low
And eat so many gags with speed
In irons—when I give it heed,
I pray for him, *et reliqua,*
That God give him . . . indeed, indeed,
That which I think . . . *et cetera.*

LXIV

And yet I think not always ill
Of him and his lieutenant, no,
Nor his inquisitor with the quill,
A pleasant man, as judges go;
As for the rest, I've naught to show,
Save little Master Robert . . . all
I love—I swear I love 'em—oh,
As God loves bankers, great and small!

LXV

Within my mind the memory sticks
That once I made, when malcontent,
Some legacies, in fifty-six,
That some, not asking my consent,
Have conned and called my *Testament*—
Their name, not mine, I make it known.
But what? It's old and evident
No man is master of his own.

LXVI

S'ainsi estoit qu'aulcun n'eust pas
Reċeu les lays que je luy mande,
J'ordonne que, après mon trespas,
A mes hoirs en face demande;
Qui sont-ilz? si on le demande:
Moreau, Provins, Robin, Turgis;
De moy, par dictez que leur mande,
Ont eu jusqu'au lict où je gys.

LXVII

P *our le revoquer ne le dy*
E *t y courust toute ma terre,*
D *e pitié ne suys refroidy*
E *nvers le bastard de la Barre:*
Parmy ses trois gluyons de foerre,
Je luy donne mes vieilles nattes;
Bonnes seront pour tenir serre
Et soy soustenir sur ses pattes.

LXVIII

Somme, plus ne diray qu'ung mot,
Car commencer veuil à tester:
Devant mon clerc Fremin, qui m'ot
(S'il ne dort), je vueil protester,
Que n'entends homme detester,
En ceste presente ordonnance;
Et ne la vueil manifester.
Sinon au royaulme de France.

LXVI

Yet if it be that there is one
Who's not received his portion grand,
I will that, when my breath is done,
Of my executors he demand.
Who are they? Let the list be scanned:
Moreau, Provins, Robin, Turgis,
Named and appointed at my hand,
Even to the bed that's under me.

LXVII

P ricked to revoke not what I've said,
E ven for all my land feuar,
D eprived not yet of pity sped
E rst to the Bastard of the Barre,
With those three wisps particular
Of straw, I give my mats, because
They will be good to ease the jar
When he is down upon his paws.

LXVIII

Now then, to say but one more word
Ere I begin to make bequest:
Before my clerk, Fremin, who's heard
(If not asleep), I do protest
That I have meant no man's unrest,
What of my present utterance;
And I will make this manifest
(Except to all the realm of France.)

LXIX

Je sens mon cueur qui s'affoiblist,
Et plus je ne puys papier.
Fremin, siez-toy près de mon lict
Que l'on ne viengne espier!
Prens tost encre, plume et papier,
Ce que nomme escryz vistement;
Puys fais-le partout copier,
Et vecy le commancement.

Ici commance Villon à tester.

LXX

Au nom de Dieu, Père éternel,
Et du Filz que Vierge parit,
Dieu au Père coeternel,
Ensemble et du Sainct Esperit,
Qui saulva, ce qu'Adam perit,
Et du pery pare les Cieulx . . .
Qui bien ce croyt, peu ne merit:
De gens mortz se font petiz Dieux.

LXXI

Mortz estoient, et corps et ames,
En damnée perdition;
Corps pourriz, et ames en flammes,
De quelconque condition;
Toutesfoys, fais exception
Des patriarches et prophètes;

LXIX

I feel my strength of heart is fled,
I've got the pip and I shall die.
Come, Fremin, sit beside my bed,
That none who comes to prowl may pry.
Take paper, pen and ink, and try
That whom I name you swiftly write;
Copy it fair and certify:
And here and now I do indite.

Here Villon begins his bequests.

LXX

In God the Eternal Father's name
And His by Mary made the Host,
One with the Father and the same,
Together in the Holy Ghost,
Who has redeemed what Adam lost
And peopled Heaven with poor damned men . . .
Who most believes will merit most
When all we dead arise again.

LXXI

Body and soul they all were dead
And damned and herded safe in Hell,
Flesh rotted, souls in torment dread,
However here their fortunes fell;
Save always (truth will thus impel)
The patriarchs and prophets sparse,

Car, selon ma conception,
Oncques grand chault n'eurent aux fesses.

LXXII

Qui me diroit: "Qui te faict mectre
Si très-avant ceste parolle,
Qui n'es en Theologie maistre?
A toy est presumption folle."
—C'est de JESUS la parabolle,
Touchant le Riche ensevely
En feu, non pas en couche molle,
Et du Ladre de dessus ly.

LXXIII

Si du Ladre eust veu le doy ardre
Jà n'en eust requis refrigère,
N'au bout d'icelluy doiz aherdre
Pour refreschir sa maschouëre.
Pions y feront mate chère,
Qui boyvent pourpoinct et chemise.
Puys que boyture y est si chère,
Dieu nous garde de la main mise!

LXXIV

Ou nom de Dieu, comme j'ay dit,
Et de sa glorieuse Mère,
Sans peché soit parfaict ce dict.
Par moy, plus maigre que chimère,
Si je n'ay eu fièvre effimère,
Ce m'a faict divine clemence;

Because, from all that I've heard tell,
Heat never hampered saintly arse.

LXXII

If one should say: "Who gave to you
The right to meddle in such things?
You're but a foolish parvenu.
What doctor's learning round you clings?"—
I say, it's Christ's own reasonings
Touching the rich man stark and grim
On coals, not roses, with the wings
Of Lazarus bent over him.

LXXIII

For, had the Leper's finger burned,
He'd not have begged that single sop
(Which at the tip his eyes discerned)
Whereof to cool his parching chop.
Ah, topers, it's an evil shop
For you who drink the clothes you sell.
Since liquor's there so dear per drop,
God help us from the hold of Hell!

LXXIV

In God's name, as I said, and hence
In Mary's glorious name therewith,
Let me complete, without offence,
My work! I'm meager as a myth.
If fever burns me not at pith,
It's due to Providence therein;

Mais d'autre dueil et perte amère
Je me tays, et ainsi commence:

LXXV

Premier, je donne ma pauvre ame
A la benoiste Trinité,
Et la commande à Nostre Dame,
Chambre de la divinité;
Priant toute la charité
Des dignes neuf Ordres des cieulx,
Que par eulx soit ce don porté
Devant le Trosne precieux.

LXXVI

Item, mon crop j'ordonne et laisse
A nostre grand mère la terre;
Les vers n'y trouveront grand gresse:
Trop lui a faict faim dure guerre.
Or luy soit delivré grand erre:
De terre vint, en terre tourne.
Toute chose, se par trop n'erre,
Voulontiers en son lieu retourne.

LXXVII

Item, et à mon plus que père,
Maistre Guillaume de Villon,
Qui m'a esté plus doulx que mère
A enfant levé de maillon.
Dejetté m'a de maint boillon,
Et de cestuy pas ne s'esjoye,

But now there's work awaits the smith,
I'll crush down anguish and begin.

LXXV

First, I commit my poor soul's doom
Unto the blessed Trinity
And to Our Lady, in whose womb
Was chambered God's divinity;
Praying the holy lenity
Of the Nine Orders of the Sky
To keep it, through infinity,
Before the precious Throne on high.

LXXVI

Item, I leave my flesh and blood
To our great common mother, Earth;
The worms will find but little food:
Too long it warred with hunger's dearth.
Now let it go for nothing worth:
From dust it came, to dust returns.
All things, unless I err, would berth
In their own homes, in their own bournes.

LXXVII

To Master William de Villon,
My more than father, who's more mild,
And has been ever, hereupon,
Than mother to her suckling child,
Who's paid my debts when I was wild,
And weeps to see me brought so low:

Si luy requiers à genoillon,
Qu'il n'en laisse toute la joye.

LXXVIII

Je luy donne ma librairie,
Et le Rommant du Pet-au-Diable,
Lequel maistre Gui Tabarie
Grossoya, qu'est hom veritable.
Par cayers est soubz une table.
Combien qu'il soit rudement faict,
La matière est si très notable,
Qu'elle amende tout le meffaict.

LXXIX

Item, donne à ma bonne mère
Pour saluer nostre Maistresse,
Qui pour moy eut douleur amère,
Dieu le sçait, et mainte tristesse;
Autre chastel ou forteresse
N'ay où retraire corps et ame,
Quand sur moy cours male destresse,
Ne ma mère, la povre femme!

Here on my bended knees, defiled,
I beg that he'll forget and go:

LXXVIII

To him I leave my library
And *Romance of the Devil's Fart*,
Engrossed by good Guy Tabarie —
A true man, that—it lies apart
In quires, beneath a table swart.
However rude the rhymes, and halt,
The matter's of so noble art
It quite redeems the writer's fault.

LXXIX

To my good mother, now I leave
To hail Our Lady of all grace . . .
God knows I've given her cause to grieve
And many a bitter shame to face.
Castle or fortress else, no place
Have I that flesh or soul may claim,
When evils follow me apace,
Nor has my mother, poor old dame!

BALLADE

Que Villon Feit à la Requeste de sa Mère, Pour Prier Nostre Dame

Dame du ciel, regente terrienne,
Emperière des infernaulx palux,
Recevez-moy, vostre humble chrestienne,
Que comprinse soye entre voz esleuz,
Ce non obstant qu'oncques rien ne valuz.
Les biens de vous, ma dame et ma maistresse,
Sont trop plus grans que ne suis pecheresse,
Sans lesquelz biens ame ne peult merir
N'avoir les cieulx, je n'en suis jengleresse.
En ceste foy je vueil vivre et mourir.

A vostre Filz dictes que je suis sienne;
Que de luy soyent mes pechez aboluz:
Pardonnés moi comme à l'Egyptienne,
Ou comme il feit au clerc Theophilus,
Lequel par vous fut quitte et absoluz,
Combien qu'il eust au diable faict promesse.
Preservez-moy, que point je ne face ce;
Vierge portant sans rompure encourir
Le sacrement qu'on celebre à la messe.
En ceste foy je vueil vivre et mourir.

BALLADE

Which Villon Made at the Request of his Mother, for a Prayer to Our Lady

Lady of Heaven, Regent of Earth's land,
Empress of all the infernal deep domain,
Receive me, thy poor Christian soul, to stand
With the elect, and so thy grace attain;
This notwithstanding I've done naught to gain
Such boon of thee, O Lady of Delight,
Save thou art greater than my sins outright
And save that else no soul may gain the sky
Where Heaven is—I do not mock thy might!
In this faith I will live and I will die.

Say to thy Son that I am in his hand,
That only of him may I be freed of stain:
Oh, pardon me as Mary of Egypt and
As once Theophilus did not ask in vain,
Though he had come to power by foul chicane
And made with Satan solemn pledge and plight.
Save me from evil grown of such despite,
O Virgin Mother at whose breast could lie
The Sacrament that in the Mass is bright!
In this faith I will live and I will die.

Femme je suis povrette et ancienne,
Ne riens ne sçay; oncques lettre ne leuz,
Au monstier voy dont suis parroissienne
Paradis painct, où sont harpes et luz,
Et ung enfer où dammez sont boulluz:
L'ung me faict paour, l'autre joye et liesse.
La joye avoir fais-moy, haulte Deesse,
A qui pecheurs doivent tous recourir,
Comblez de foy, sans faincte ne paresse.
En ceste foy je vueil vivre et mourir.

ENVOI

V *ous portastes, Vierge, digne princesse,*
J *esus regnant, qui n'a ne fin ne cesse.*
L *e Tout-Puissant, prenant nostre foiblesse,*
L *aissa les cieulx et nous vint secourir;*
O *ffrist à mort sa très clère jeunese;*
N *ostre Seigneur tel est, tel le confesse,*
En ceste foy je vueil vivre et mourir.

LXXX

Item, m'amour, ma chère Rose,
Ne luy laisse ne cueur ne foye:
Elle aymeroit mieulx autre chose,
Combien qu'elle ait assez monnoye:
Quoy? une grande bourse de soye,
Pleine d'escuz, profonde et large:
Mais pendu soit-il, que je soye,
Qui luy lairra escu ne targe.

I am a poor old woman, and command
Nothing of learning to my untaught brain,
But in the church I see and understand
Upon the one side Heaven, where thou dost reign
And on the other the damned souls all in pain.
One gives me joy, the other brings me fright.
Give me the joy, O Goddess, and the sight
Of thee, to whom all sinners must apply,
Feigning nor failing, though by day or night!
In this faith I will live and I will die.

ENVOI

V irgin, thou broughtest, into the finite,
I nfinite Mercy, endless and recondite:
L o, the Almighty, who makes all sin white,
L eft Heaven to hear and heed our human cry,
O ffering his clean young life for death to smite.
N ow he is Lord, to whom all prayers take flight.
In this faith I will live and I will die.

LXXX

Item, to my love, my dear Rose,
I leave not heart nor liver; faith,
She'd care for other things than those,
Though she has money she'll bequeath.
What then? Ah, sure a silken sheath
Full of great quoins—oh, wide and deep,
But hang him, though 'twere my own death,
Who leaves her any coins to keep!

LXXXI

Car elle en a, sans moy, assez.
Mais de cela il ne m'en chault;
Mes grans deduictz en sont passez;
Plus n'en ay le cropion chauld.
Si m'en desmetz aux hoirs Michault,
Qui fut nommé le bon fouterre.
Priez pour luy, faictes ung sault:
A Saint-Satur gist, soubz Sancerre.

LXXXII

Ce non obstant, pour m'acquitter
Envers Amours, plus qu'envers elle,
(Car oncques n'y peuz acquester
D'amours une seule estincelle;
Ne sçay s'à tous est si rebelle
Qu'à moy: ce ne m'est grand esmoy;
Mais, par saincte Marie la belle!
Je n'y voy que rire pour moy).

LXXXIII

Ceste Ballade luy envoye,
Qui se termine toute en R.
Qui la portera ? que j'y voye:
Ce sera Pernet de la Barre,
Pourveu, s'il rencontre en son erre
Ma damoyselle au nez tortu,
Il luy dira, sans plus enquerre:
Orde paillarde, d'où viens-tu?

LXXXI

For she's enough without my aid.
But all this matters not a jot;
My expectations are all laid;
For her my rump's no longer hot.
I pass to Michaut's heirs the pot,
He who was called that good futterer.
Pray you for him: do love's gavotte:
Saint Satur holds him, near Sancerre.

LXXXII

This by the way, to acquit my heart
More toward love than toward my love
(For never gained I any part
Of tenderness or joy thereof;
Nor do I know if she could prove
So hard to others, no, nor care.
For by Saint Magdalen above,
I see no more than laughter there)—

LXXXIII

To her this ballade I intend,
The lines whereof all end in R.
Who shall be bearer? Why I'll send
None but my Peter of the Barre,
Provided, should he spy afar
My damsel with the nose turned in,
He ask this word particular:
"You dirty whore, where have you been?"

BALLADE

De Villon à s'Amye

F *aulse beaulté, qui tant me coust cher,*
R *ude en effect, hypocrite doulceur;*
A *mour dure, plus que fer, à mascher;*
N *ommer que puis, de ma deffaçon seur:*
C *herme felon, la mort d'ung povre cueur;*
O *rgueil mussé, qui gens met au mourir;*
Y *eulx sans pitié! Ne veult droicte rigueur,*
S *ans empirer, ung pauvre secourir?*

M *ieulx m'eust valu avoir esté crier*
A *illeurs secours, c'eust esté mon bonheur:*
R *ien ne m'eust sceu hors de ce fait chasseur;*
T *rotter m'en fault en fuyte à deshonneur.*
H *aro, haro, le grand et le mineur!*
E *t qu'est cecy? mourray, sans coup ferir,*
Ou pitié veult, selon ceste teneur,
Sans empirer, ung povre secourir.

BALLADE

From Villon to His Love

F alse beauty, who so long has cost me dear,
R ude at the last—dissembler—epicure—
A harder love is yours than steel of spear;
N ay, these beside, mean my destruction sure:
C harm to slay hearts caught in their evil lure;
O r secret pride that kills without remorse;
I mpiteous eyes!—would not stern prefecture
S ave a poor man, not make his fortune worse?

M ore I had gained to have cried in other ear
A nd sought elsewhere to make love's overture
R ight well I knew I'd find no favor here;
T o follow her meant honor to abjure.
H avoc and shame, in large and miniature!
E lse what is left? To die too weak to curse,
Or pity must, now in my life's tenure,
Save a poor man, not make his fortune worse.

Ung temps viendra, qui fera desseicher,
Jaulnir, flestrir, vostre espanie fleur:
Je m'en risse, se tant peusse marcher,
Mais nenny: lors (ce seroit donc foleur)
Vieil je seray; vous, laide, et sans couleur.
Or, beuvez fort, tant que ru peult courir.
Ne donnez pas à tous ceste douleur,
Sans empirer, ung povre secourir.

ENVOI

Prince amoureux, des amans le greigneur,
Vostre mal gré ne vouldroye encourir;
Mais tout franc cueur doit, par Nostre Seigneur,
Sans empirer, ung povre secourir.

LXXXIV

Item, à maistre Ythier, marchant,
Auquel mon branc laissay jadis,
Donne (mais qu'il le mette en chant),
Ce lay, contenant des vers dix;
Et aussi ung De Profundis
Pour ses anciennes amours,
Des quelles le nom je ne dis,
Car il me herroit à tousjours.

A time will come when you'll be sad and sere,
Withered and faded all your grace mature:
And then I'd laugh, could I but see that year.
But no! That, too, would only shame procure.
I should be old then, also, and obscure.
Therefore let's drink while yet the stream's
in course.
But oh, remember, while youth's days endure,
Save a poor man, not make his fortune worse!

ENVOI

O Amorous Prince, of all love connoisseur,
Your ill-will none would risk who's pain in
purse;
Yet free hearts ought—by the Lord God!—
if pure,
Save a poor man, not make his fortune worse.

LXXXIV

Item, to Master Ythier (long
Ago I left him my bright blade),
I give (but so he'll set to song)
This rhyme, of verses one decade;
A *De Profundis*, too, well made,
To mourn for one he loved of yore,
The name of whom I'll not parade,
Because he'd hate me evermore.

LAY OU PLUSTOST RONDEAU

Mort, j'appelle de ta rigueur,
Qui m'as ma maistresse ravie,
Et n'es pas encore assouvie,
Se tu ne me tiens en langueur.
Onc puis n'euz force ne vigueur;
Mais que te nuysoit-elle en vie,
Mort?

Deux estions, et n'avions qu'ung cueur;
S'il est mort, force est que devie,
Voire, ou que je vive sans vie,
Comme les images, par cueur,
Mort!

LXXXV

Item, à maistre Jehan Cornu,
Autres nouveaux lays luy vueil faire,
Car il m'a tousjours secouru
A mon grand besoing et affaire:
Pour ce, le jardin luy transfère,
Que maistre Pierre Bourguignon
Me renta, en faisant refaire
L'huys, et redrecier le pignon.

LAY OR RATHER RONDEAU

Death, I appeal from thy stern ways,
Who hast robbed me of my lady's love,
And art not glutted yet thereof,
Seeing that my strength no more essays
To walk abroad in the sun's bright rays.
What evil in her life should move
Death?

Ah, two we were, with one heart to blaze;
Now she is dead, I have lived enough,
Save as these sculptured saints above,
Stolid as stone through all my days,
Death!

LXXXV

Item, to Master John Cuckold
My Testament anew declares,
Since he's been diligent to hold
Attention to my large affairs:
The house and grounds I bought by shares
Of rent from Peter Burgundy,
Provided that he first repairs
The door and gable worthily.

LXXXVI

Par faulte d'ung huys, j'y perdis
Ung grez, et ung manche de hoüe.
Alors, huyt faulcons, non pas dix,
N'y eussent pas prins une alloüe.
L'hostel est seur, mais qu'on le cloüe.
Pour enseigne y mis ung havet;
Qui que l'ait prins, point ne l'en loüe:
Sanglante nuict et bas chevet.

LXXXVII

Item, et pource que la femme
De maistre Pierre Sainct Amant
(Combien, si coulpe y a ou blasme,
Dieu luy pardonne doulcement!)
Me meist en reng de caymant,
Pour le Cheval Blanc qui ne bouge,
Je luy délaisse une jument,
Et pour la Mulle ung asne rouge.

LXXXVIII

Item, donne à sire Denys
Hesselin, Esleu de Paris,
Quatorze muys de vin d'Aulnis,
Prins chez Turgis, à mes perilz.
S'il en beuvoit tant que periz
En fust son sens et sa raison,
Qu'on mette de l'eau ès barrilz:
Vin perd mainte bonne maison.

LXXXVI

By reason of that door I lost
A whetstone and hoe-handle—mark!
Since then eight hawks, or ten at most,
Had failed to glean a single lark.
The place is safe, if sealed at dark.
I hung a hook for sign, to fright;
Who stole it thence, I wish him—hark!—
A bolster low and a bloody night.

LXXXVII

Item, because that woman came
(Of Master Peter Saint Amant—
If it were fault or any blame,
God pardon sweetly, since I shan't!)
To list me as a mendicant,
For the White Horse that will not pass
I toss a mare that's relevant,
And for the She Mule a red ass.

LXXXVIII

Item, I give to Sir Denis
Hesselin, Elect of Paris, brisk,
Fourteen casks of wine Aulnis
Taken of Turgis at my risk.
If he should drink until he frisk
And sense and reason drown, the souse,
Let one his head in water whisk:
Wine's ruined many a noble house.

LXXXIX

Item, donne à mon advocat,
Maistre Guillaume Charruau,
Quoy qu'il marchande ou ait estat,
Mon branc . . . Je me tays du fourreau.
Il aura, avec ce, ung réau
En change, affin que sa bourse enfle,
Prins sur la chaussée et carreau
De la grand closture du Temple.

XC

Item, mon procureur Fournier
Aura, pour toutes ses corvées
(Simple seroit de l'espargner)
En ma bourse quatre havées,
Car maintes causes m'a saulvées,
Justes, ainsi, JESUS-CHRIST m'ayde!
Comme elles ont esté trouvées;
Mais bon droit a bon mestier d'ayde.

XCI

Item, je donne à maistre Jacques
Raguyer le grand godet de Grève,
Pourveu qu'il payera quatre plaques,
Deust-il vendre, quoy qu'il luy griefve,
Ce dont on ceuvre mol et grève;
Aller sans chausse en eschappin,
Tous les matins, quand il se liève,
Au trou de la Pomme de pin.

LXXXIX

Item, I give my advocate,
Good Master William Charruau,
My sword to add to his estate . . .
I say naught of the scabbard, though.
And let a gold piece therewith go,
In change that shall his purse distort,
Picked from the paving stones, you know,
Of the great Temple's cloistered court.

XC

Item, my lawyer Fournier,—gold
For all his legal drudgery
(This would be easy to withhold)
Out of my purse four cents gets he
For many a case he won for me,
All just, as Jesus is my aid!
So read the records of decree;
But right has reason for handmaid.

XCI

Item, I give to Master James
Raguyer the great Glass of the Strand,
Provided that he pay all claims
(Four cents), though payment make demand
He sell his hose and drawers and stand
Stark in his shoes to everyone
Each morning when he rises and
Sets forth to visit the Fir-Cone.

XCII

Item, quant est de Mairebeuf,
Et de Nicolas de Louviers,
Vache ne leur donne ne beuf,
Car vachers ne sont, ne bouviers,
Mais gens à porter esperviers,
Ne cuidez pas que je vous joüe,
Pour prendre perdriz et plouviers.
Sans faillir, sur la Maschecroue.

XCIII

Item, vienne Robert Turgis
A moy, je luy payeray son vin,
Combien, s'il trouve mon logis,
Plus fort sera que le devin.
Le droit luy donne d'eschevin,
Que j'ay comme enfant de Paris . . .
Se je parle ung peu poictevin,
Ice m'ont deux dames appris.

XCIV

Filles sont très belles et gentes,
Demourantes à Sainct-Genou,
Près Sainct-Julian des Voventes,
Marches de Bretaigne ou Poictou,
Mais je ne dy proprement où,
Or y pensez trestous les jours,
Car je ne suis mie si fou . . .
Je pense celer mes amours.

XCII

Item, regarding Mairebeuf
And Nicholas de Louvieu,
I will give neither beef nor buff;
They are not cowherds given to stew,
But men who carry hawks in mew
(Think not I jest in this thing, lovers)
To loose them, for La Maschecroue,
At certain partridges and plovers.

XCIII

Item, if Robert Turgis come
To me, I'll pay him for his wine,
Albeit if he find out my home
It's more than magic may divine.
To him my right of suffrage—mine
Because I am a son of Paris . . .
If sometimes I speak Poitevine,
Two ladies taught me what my share is.

XCIV

Those girls are fair and elegant
And dwelling now at Saint-Genou,
Near Saint-Julian des Voventes
Or the Breton borders or Poitou,
But I will give no clearer clew
To where they live and lay their lures,
For I am not a pimp so new . . .
I seek to cover my amours.

XCV

Item, à Jehan Raguyer je donne
Qui est sergent, voire des Douze,
Tant qu'il vivra, ainsi l'ordonne,
Tous les jours une talemouze,
Pour brouter et fourrer sa mouse,
Prinse à la table de Bailly;
A Maubuay sa gorge arrouse,
Car à manger n'a pas failly.

XCVI

Item, donne au prince des Sotz
Pour ung bon sot Michault du Four,
Qui à la fois dit de bons motz
Et chante bien: Ma doulce amour!
Avec ce, il aura le bonjour.
Brief, mais qu'il fust ung peu en poinct,
Il est ung droit sot de séjour,
Et est plaisant où il n'est point.

XCVII

Item, aux unze vingtz Sergens
Donne, car leur faict est honneste,
Et sont bonnes et doulces gens,
Denis Richier, et Jehan Vallette,
A chascun une grand cornette,
Pour pendre à leurs chappeaulx de feautre:
J'entendz ceulx de pied, à la guette,
Car je n'ay que faire des autres.

XCV

Item, to John Raguyer I give,
A sergeant of the Twelve indeed,
Each day, so long as he shall live,
A cake of cheese whereon to feed;
Let his nose find the same with speed;
From Bailly's table be it haled;
At Maubuée let him wet the greed
To glut which he has never failed.

XCVI

Item, I give the Prince of Fools
A pleasant clown—Michael du Four—
As droll as ever wag that drools,
And sings right well, *My Sweet Amour.*
With this I give good wishes, sure.
In brief, though now and then inapt,
He's such a fool as folk endure,
And, when he's gone, he leaves them rapt.

XCVII

Two sergeants of the Company,
Because they're honest and well met
And mild as one could wish to see—
Dennis Richier and John Vallette—
To each I give a huge cornet
To wear in place of hat . . . of course
I mean the watch afoot; as yet
I've had no dealings with the horse.

XCVIII

Derechef, donne à Périnet,
J'entendz le bastard de la Barre,
Pour ce qu'il est beau fils et net,
En son escu, en lieu de barre,
Trois detz plombez, de bonne carre,
Ou ung beau joly jeu de cartes . . .
Mais quoy! s'on l'oyt vessir ne poirre,
En oultre aura les fièvres quartes.

XCIX

Item, ne vueil plus que Chollet
Dolle, trenche, douve ne boyse,
Relye brocq ne tonnelet,
Mais tous ses outils changer voyse
A une espée lyonnoise,
Et retienne le hutinet:
Combien qu'il n'ayme ne noyse,
Si luy plaist-il ung tantinet.

C

Item, je donne à Jehan le Lou,
Homme de bien et bon marchant,
Pour ce qu'il est linget et flou,
Et que Chollet est mal chassant,
Ung beau petit chiennet couchant,
Qui ne lairra poulaille en voye,
Le long tabart, et bien cachant,
Pour les musser, qu'on ne les voye.

XCVIII

Again, I give to Peter—eh?—
I mean the Bastard of the Barre—
He's a good boy, let be what may—
Upon his shield, in place of bar,
Three leaded dice, right fistular,
Or a fine card deck marked with art.
But let the quartan fever jar
If he but fizzle once, or fart!

XCIX

Item, I order that Chollet
Abandon hammer, saw and maul
And trade of carpenter, straightway,
And no more cooper barrels tall,
But take the sword for tool, though all
His knocking alters not a whit:
I know that he loves not to brawl,
But yet he likes a little of it.

C

Item, I give to John the Wolf,
Good merchant and an upright man,
Because he's thin as I myself,
Chollet not being of hunting clan,
A fine little setter pup that can
See every chicken in the way,
And a long cloak of fustian
Wherewith to cover man and prey.

CI

Item, a l'orfévre Du Boys,
Donne cent clouz, queues et testes,
De gingembre sarazinoys,
Non pas pour accoupler ses boytes,
Mais pour conjoindre culz et coettes,
Et couldre jambons et andoilles,
Tant que le laict en monte aux tettes,
Et le sang en devalle aux coilles.

CII

Au capitaine Jehan Riou,
Tant pour luy que pour ses archiers,
Je donne six hures de lou,
Qui n'est pas viande à porchiers,
Prins à gros mastins de bouchiers,
Et cuittes en vin de buffet.
Pour manger de ces morceaulx chiers.
On en feroit bien un mau faict.

CIII

C'est viande ung peu plus pesante,
Que duvet, ne plume, ne liège.
Elle est bonne à porter en tente,
Ou pour user en quelque siège.
Et, s'ilz estoient prins en un piège,
Les mastins, qu'ils ne sceussent courre,
J'ordonne, moy qui suis bon miège,
Que des peaulx, sur l'hyver se fourre.

CI

Item, to Du Bois, now, goldsmith,
A hundred nails (of cloves, for it's
Of spice I'm speaking), not therewith
To join chests, but for that which knits
Buttocks to feather-beds, and fits
The sausage to the ham, and swells
A tide of milk to mount the tits
And blood to serve the testicles.

CII

To archery Captain John Riou
(As much to him as to his men)
I give six heads of wolves to chew
(No meat for swineherds, downtrodden),
Taken by dogs from butcher's pen,
And boiled in homemade wine—my word!
To eat such fare is foretoken
That something ill will be interred.

CIII

A heavier fodder, this, to champ
Than feathers, cork, or eider-down.
It's good to have when one's in camp
Or in some long-beleaguered town.
And if they're trapped and cannot down
Their prey (the dogs, I'd have you note),
Since I am a tanner of renown,
I give their pelts to line his coat.

CIV

Item, à Robin Troussecaille,
Qui s'est en service bien faict;
A pied ne va comme une caille,
Mais sur roussin gros et reffaict:
Je luy donne, de mon buffet,
Une jalle qu'emprunter n'ose;
Si aura mesnage parfait:
Plus ne luy failloit autre chose.

CV

Item, donne à Perrot Girard,
Barbier juré de Bourg-la-Royne,
Deux bassins et ung coquemard,
Puis qu'à gaigner mect telle peine.
Des ans y a demy douzaine,
Qu'en son hostel, de cochons gras
M'apastela une sepmaine;
Tesmoing l'abesse de Pourras.

CVI

Item, aux Frères mendians,
Aux Devotes et aux Beguines,
Tant de Paris que d'Orléans,
Tant Turlupins que Turlupines,
De grasses souppes jacobines
Et flans leurs fais ôblation;
Et puis après, soubz les courtines,
Parler de contemplation.

CIV

Item, to Robin Troussecaille,
Who's done so well in service that
Afoot he goes not, like a quail,
But sits astride a stallion fat—
I give him, from my sideboard flat,
A bowl, to borrow which he fears;
And thus his house is furnished pat
And nothing's lacking, it appears.

CV

Item, I give Perry Girard,
That barber sworn of Bourg-la-Reine,
Two basins and a skillet shard,
The which are mighty hard to gain.
Six years ago (I must explain)
In his town house, on suckling pigs,
He fed me seven days amain;
The Abbess of Port Royal twigs.

CVI

Item, to Brothers Mendicant,
Daughters of God, and all Beguines,
In Paris or Orléans extant,
And male and female Turlupines,
Of greasy soups of Jacobines
And custards, I thus make oblation;
And later, under curtain screens,
Let them discourse on contemplation.

CVII

Si ne suis-je pas qui leur donne,
Mais de tous enfans sont les mères.
C'est Dieu, qui ainsi les guerdonne,
Pour qui souffrent peines amères.
Il fault qu'ils vivent, les beaulx pères,
Et mesmement ceulx de Paris.
S'ilz font plaisir à nos commères,
Ilz ayment ainsi les maris.

CVIII

Quoy que maistre Jehan de Pontlieu
En voulsist dire, et reliqua,
Contrainct et en publique lieu,
Honteusement s'en revocqua.
Maistre Jehan de Mehun se moqua
De leur façon; si feit Mathieu.
Mais on doit honorer ce qu'a
Honnoré l'Eglise de Dieu.

CIX

Si me submectz leur serviteur,
En tout ce que puis faire et dire,
A les honorer de bon cueur,
Et servir, sans y contredire.
L'homme bien fol est d'en mesdire,
Car, soit à part, ou en prescher,
Ou ailleurs, il ne fault pas dire
Si gens sont pour eux revencher.

CVII

Yet it's not I who give this last—
Nuns are mothers each child acquires—
But God, who holds their souls steadfast,
For whom they bear such bitter fires.
And monks must live, the handsome sires,
Even as those of Paris do.
To please the wife in her desires
A monk will love the husband too.

CVIII

Whatever Master John Poilli
Ventured to say, *et reliqua*,
He was constrained, and publicly,
With shame, to other aria.
And John de Meung mocked their way,
And Matthew found their customs odd.
But one should honor all, they say,
Who help uphold the Church of God.

CIX

So I submit, for my own part,
In all that I may say or do,
And honor them with all my heart,
And, without protest, serve them, too.
The man's a fool that dares to boo,
Since this by none is now challenged,
That whether it chance in church purlieu
Or elsewhere, priests will be revenged.

CX

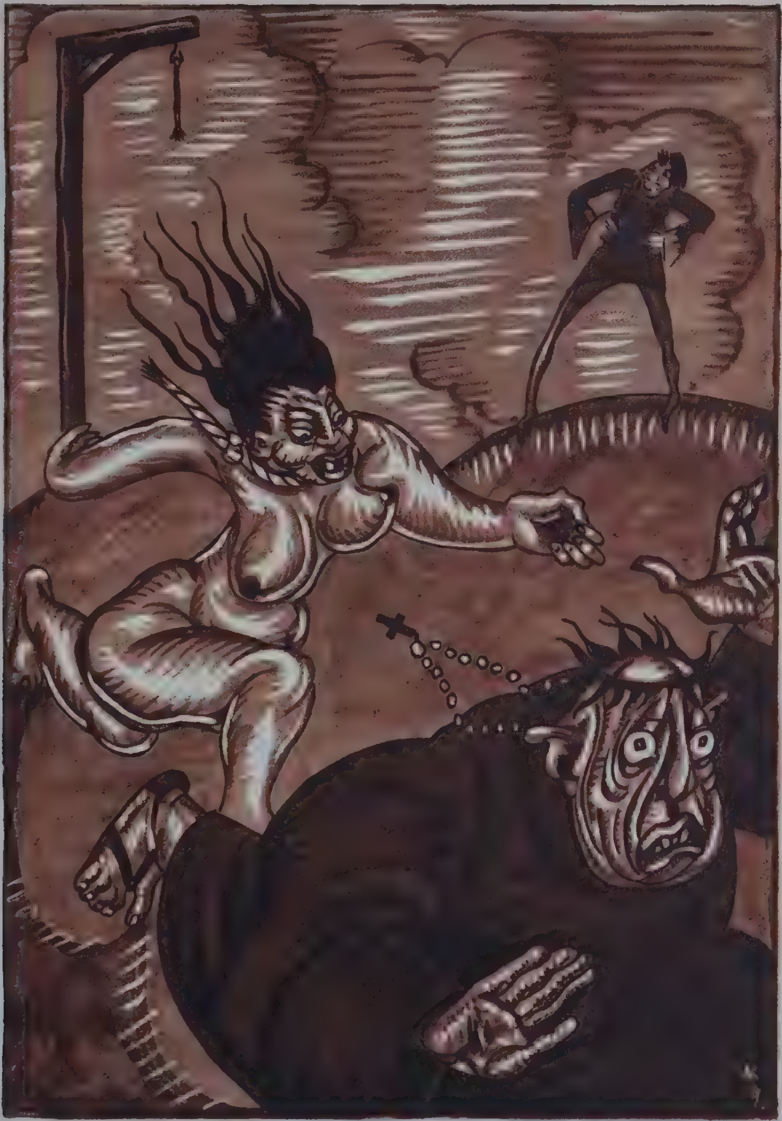
Item, je donne à frère Baulde,
Demourant à l'hostel des Carmes,
Portant chère hardie et baulde,
Une sallade et deux guysarmes,
Que de Tosca et ses gens d'armes
Ne luy riblent sa Caige-vert.
Vieil est: s'il ne se rend aux armes,
C'est bien le diable de Vauvert.

CXI

Item, pour ce que le Scelleur,
Maint estront de mousche a masché,
Donne, car homme est de valleur,
Son sceau davantage craché,
Et qu'il ait le pouce escaché,
Pour tout comprendre à une voye;
J'entendz celluy de l'Evesché
Car les autres, Dieu les pourvoye.

CXII

Quant de messieurs les Auditeux,
Leur chambre auront lembroysée;
Et ceulx qui ont les culz rongneux;
Chascun une chaise persée,
Mais qu'à la petite Macée
D'Orléans, qui eut ma ceincture,
L'amende soit bien hault taxée:
Elle est une mauvaise ordure.



He's old, but if he yield her charms . . .

CX

Item, I give to Brother Baude,
Who lives among the Carmelite swarms,
And downs good wine with every ode,
A sallet and two long gisarms,
Lest Tosca and his men-at-arms
Deprive him of his cataplasm.
He's old, but if he yield her charms
The Devil's in the man's orgasm.

CXI

Item, because the Chancellor
So much fly-excrement has chewed,
I give, he being man of valor,
His seal, with hawked-up spittle spewed,
And may his thumb be crushed and screwed,
That all may know him at a glance;
I mean him with the Bishop mewed—
The rest I leave to God and chance.

CXII

As for the Justices of Trials,
Their chamber shall be panelled full;
And those of them that have the piles,
To each a handsome chamber-stool:
But only if Macée, that trull
Of Orléans, who took my sash,
Be caught and fined for what she stole—
The evil ordure—in hard cash.

CXIII

Item, donne à maistre Françoys,
Promoteur de la vacquerie,
Ung hault gorgerin d'Escossoys,
Toutesfois sans orfaverie;
Car, quant receut chevalerie,
Il maugrea Dieu et saint George.
Parler n'en oyt qu'il ne s'en rie,
Comme enragé, à pleine gorge.

CXIV

Item, à maistre Jehan Laurens,
Qui a les povres yeulx si rouges,
Par le péché de ses parens,
Qui beurent en barilz et courges,
Je donne l'envers de mes bouges,
Pour chascun matin les torcher . . .
S'il fust archevesque de Bourges,
Du cendal eust, mais il est cher.

CXV

Item, à maistre Jehan Cotard,
Mon procureur en Court d'Eglise,
Devoye environ un patard,
Car à présent bien m'en advise,
Quant chicanner me feit Denise,
Disant que l'avoye mauldite;
Pour son ame (qu'ès cieulx soit mise!)
Ceste oraison j'ay cy escripte.

CXIII

Item, I give to Master Frank,
Promoter of the Vaccary.
A high neck-piece of Scottish rank,
Plain as brown hemp, sans jewelry.
When he was given Chivalry,
He blasphemed God and good Saint George.
To hear but of such drollery
He laughs like mad with all his gorge.

CXIV

To Master John Laurens, no less,
Whose poor eyes are so rimmed with red—
Fault of his parents' lecherousness,
Who went from barrel-house to bed—
I give my pockets, every shred,
To wipe away the morning's tear . . .
Were he as Bourges' archbishop bred,
He had had silk, although it's dear.

CXV

Item, for Master John Cotard,
My Church Court representative,
To whom were due some pennies for
The good advice he used to give
In Denise' charges extensive,
Wherein she claimed I'd libelled her—
For his soul (if in Heaven it live)
I've made this prayer and moistener.

BALLADE ET ORAISON

Père Noé, qui plantastes la vigne;
Vous aussi, Loth, qui bustes au rocher,
Par tel party qu'Amour, qui gens engigne,
De vos filles si vous feit approcher,
Pas ne le dy pour le vous reprocher;
Architriclin, qui bien sceustes cest art,
Tous trois vous pry qu'o vous veuillez percher
L'ame du bon feu maistre Jehan Cotard!

Jadis extraict il fut de vostre ligne,
Luy qui beuvoit meilleur et plus cher;
Et ne deust-il avoir vaillant ung pigne,
Certes, sur tous, c'estoit un bon archer;
On ne luy sceut pot des mains arracher,
Car de bien boire oncques ne fut faitard.
Nobles seigneurs, ne souffrez empescher
L'ame du bon feu maistre Jehan Cotard!

Comme un viellart qui chancelle et trepigne
L'ay veu souvent, quand il s'alloit coucher;
Et une foys il se feit une bigne,
Bien m'en souvient, à l'estal d'ung boucher.
Brief, on n'eust sçeu en ce monde chercher
Meilleur pion, pour boire tost et tard.

BALLADE AND PRAYER

Good father Noah, who first planted vine;
You also, Lot, who drank so deep one day
That love, which lurks in bubbles of the wine,
Brought each your daughters to your bed—
but stay!
Thereof no silly censure will I say;
Architriclin, who knew what all wines are:
You three will set in lordly place, I pray,
The soul of that good Master John Cotard.

Scion he was of your own ancient line,
And drank the best and dearest that men
may;
No coin he kept within his purse to pine,
But shot all such, like arrows, fast away;
One never saw a full pot leave him, nay,
Nor him with any kind of drink make war.
O noble lords, refuse not now to allay
The soul of that good Master John Cotard!

Like an old man with wavering legs and spine
I've seen him often as he'd bedward sway;
And once he took a bump that made him whine
(Well I remember) in a butcher's bay.
And none could find, as through the world
he'd stray,
A better, late or early, near or far.

Faictes entrer quand vous orrez hucher
L'ame du bon feu maistre Jehan Cotard.

ENVOI

Prince, il n'eust sçeu jusqu'à terre cracher;
Tousjours crioyt: Haro, la gorge m'ard!
Et si ne sceut oncq sa soif estancher,
L'ame du bon feu maistre Jehan Cotard.

CXVI

Item, vueil que le jeune Merle
Desormais gouverne mon change,
Car de changer envys me mesle,
Pourvou que tousjours baille en change,
Soit à privé, soit à estrange,
Pour trois escus, six brettes targes;
Pour deux angelotz, ung grand ange:
Car amans doivent estre larges.

CXVII

Item, j'ay sceu, à ce voyage,
Que mes trois povres orphelins
Sont creus et deviennent en aage,
Et n'ont pas testes de belins,
Et qu'enfans d'icy à Salins
N'a mieulx saichans leur tour d'escolle;
Or, par l'ordre des Mathelins,
Telle jeunesse n'est pas folle.

Oh, bid him enter when the trumpets bray
The soul of that good Master John Cotard.

ENVOI

Prince, he was never known to spit in the clay;
His cry was ever: "Ho, my throat will char!"
Wherefore have wine in plenty, lest you slay
The soul of that good Master John Cotard.

CXVI

Item, I will that the young Merle
Hereafter govern my exchange;
In trade I have a wish to whirl,
Provided he always arrange
To give to each one, known or strange,
Three pennies for six cents, and charge
For two half crowns one crown in change:
For every lover should be large.

CXVII

Item, I've looked and it appears
My three poor orphans, once but shreds,
Are grown in wisdom as in years
And are by no means muttonheads.
From here to Salins no child sheds
More credit on his term of school;
And by the Order of Boneheads,
Such youth cannot be all the fool.

CXVIII

Si vueil qu'ilz voysent à l'estude;
Où? chez maistre Pierre Richer.
Le Donnait *est pour eulx trop rude:*
Jà ne les y vueil empescher.
Ilz sçauront, je l'ayme plus cher:
Ave, salus, tibi decus,
Sans plus grandes lettres chercher:
Tousjours n'ont pas clercs le dessus.

CXIX

Cecy estudient, et puis ho!
Plus procéder je leur deffens
Quant d'entendre le grand Credo,
Trop fort il est pour telz enfants.
Mon grant tabard en deux je fendz:
Si vueil que la moictié s'en vende,
Pour eulx en achepter des flans,
Car jeunesse est ung peu friande.

CXX

Et veuil qu'ilz soyent informez
En meurs, quoy que couste bature:
Chapperons auront enfermez,
Et les poulces soubz la ceincture;
Humbles à toute créature;
Disans: Hen? Quoy? Il n'en est rien!
Si diront gens, par adventure:
"Voicy enfans de lieu de bien?"

CXVIII

They should have further learning. Where?
With Master Peter Richer, sure.
Grammar's too hard for them, I swear;
I would not make them thus endure.
They know I love this learning pure:
Ave, salus, tibi decus,
Without more stuffing of *kultur:*
Clerks win not always in life's fracas.

CXIX

Let them learn this thing well—and ho!
Beyond that point I bid them cease;
For as to all the great *Credo,*
It's much too much for lads like these.
Let my cloak be divided, please,
Whereof to each a moiety mete
To sell for custard-cups and cheese:
For youth is fond of fare that's sweet.

CXX

I'd have them well and amply schooled
In manners, cost me what it may:
Their caps not worn aslant, but pulled
Well down and thumbs in girdles grey;
Modest of mien in every way,
With "How?" or "What?" or "Not at all!"
That men, observing them, shall say:
"These lads were bred in some good hall."

CXXI

Item, à mes pouvres clergeons,
Auxquelz mes titres je resigne,
Beaulx enfans et droictz comme joncs
Les voyans, je m'en dessaisine,
Et, sans recevoir, leur assigne,
Seur comme qui l'auroit en paulme,
A ung certain jour que l'on signe,
Sur l'hostel de Guesdry Guillaume.

CXXII

Quoy que jeunes et esbatans
Soyent, en rien ne me desplaist;
Dedans vingt, trente ou quarante ans
Bien autres seront, se Dieu plaist.
Il faict mal qui ne leur complaist,
Car ce sont beaux enfans et gents;
Et qui les bat ne fiert, fol est,
Car enfans si deviennent gens.

CXXIII

Les bourses des Dix-et-huict clercs
Auront; je m'y vueil travailler:
Pas ilz ne dorment comme lerz
Qui trois mois sont sans resveiller.
Au fort, triste est le sommeiller
Que faict jeune cœur en jeunesse
Tant qu'enfin luy faille veiller,
Quant reposer deust en viellesse.

CXXI

Item, to my poor clericals,
To whom my titles I resigned,
Fine boys and right as reeds in all's
To see of them or be divined,
In simple fee I have assigned,
For value this day paid in hand,
To have, rent free (therein confined),
Bill Gelder's Paris mansion grand.

CXXII

Though young they are and gambolsome,
I'm not the least bit ill at ease;
In less than two-score years to come
They will be sobered, so God please.
And he does wrong who injures these,
They being such handsome boys and fair;
The fool who chides them disagrees
That men are only boys that were.

CXXIII

The purses of the Eighteen Clerks
They two shall have: I'll see to it.
They are not dormice of the parks
To sleep three months in some deep pit.
It's ill to doze when one is fit
And blithe of heart in youthfulness,
As in the end to wake the wit
Of age and hold it slumberless.

CXXIV

Cy en escris au collateur
Lettres semblables et pareilles:
Or prient pour leur bienfaicteur,
Ou qu'on leur tire les oreilles.
Aucunes gens ont grand merveilles,
Que tant m'encline envers ces deux;
Mais foy que doy, festes et vieilles,
Oncques ne vey les mères d'eulx!

CXXV

Item, et à Michault Culdou,
Et à sire Charlot Taranne,
Cent solz: s'ilz demandent prins où?
Ne leur chaille; ilz viendront de manne;
Et unes houses de basanne,
Autant empeigne que semelle;
Pourveu qu'ils me saulveront Jehanne,
Et autant une autre comme elle.

CXXVI

Item, au seigneur de Grigny,
Auquel jadis laissay Vicestre,
Je donne la tour de Billy,
Pourveu, se huys y a ne fenestre
Qui soit ne debout ne en estre,
Qu'il mette très bien tout appoinct:
Face argent à dextre, à senestre:
Il m'en fault et il n'en a point.

CXXIV

Hereof I'll write the almoner
To this effect: if either fears
To pray for me, their treasurer,
Let him be tweaked upon the ears.
And though to many it appears
Strange that I love these more than others,
I swear that, gaily or in tears,
I never monkied with their mothers.

CXXV

To Michael Culdou, now—but thence
Sir Charley Taranne half shall own—
A hundred sous. Should they ask whence—
But this as manna falls, not stone.
Therewith some shoes, of sheepskin sewn
As much in good thick sole as vamp,
Provided they shield me from Joan
And such another of her stamp.

CXXVI

Item, to my Lord de Grigny,
To whom I left Bicêtre of old,
I give the tower of Billy,
Provided (since the place is cold)
All doors and windows manifold,
Now broken, be repaired with speed;
Let him from right and left make gold:
I've none, and gold he'll surely need.

CXXVII

Item, à Thibault de la Garde:
Thibault? je mentz, il a nom Jehan;
Que luy donray-je, que ne perde?
Assez ay perdu tout cest an.
Dieu le vueille pourvoir, amen . . . *!*
Le barillet? par m'ame, voyre!
Genevoys est le plus ancien,
Et plus beau nez a pour y boyre.

CXXVIII

Item, je donne à Basanyer,
Notaire et greffier criminel,
De giroffle plain ung panyer,
Prins chez maistre Jehan de Ruel.
Tant à Mautainct; tant à Rosnel;
Et, avec ce don de giroffle,
Servir, de cueur gent et ysnel,
Le seigneur qui sert sainct Cristofle,

CXXIX

Auquel ceste Ballade donne,
Pour sa dame, qui tous biens a.
S'Amour ainsi tous ne guerdonne,
Je ne m'esbahys de cela;
Car au Pas conquesté celle a,
Que tint René, roy de Cecille,
Où si bien fist, et peu parla,
Qu'oncques Hector feit, ne Troïle.

CXXVII

Item, to Tibalt of the Garde . . .
Tibalt? I lie: his name is John . . .
What can I give that won't come hard?
I've lost enough this year that's gone.
God will provide . . . amen! But on!
The barrel? By my soul, indeed!
Yet Genevois is the elder one:
His nose displays a prettier need.

CXXVIII

Item, I give to Basanier,
Who's Notary and Clerk as well,
A basketful of cloves, one day
Taken from Master John Ruel.
The same to Mautaint and Rosnel,
And with this legacy confer
Advice they serve, alert and *schnell*,
That lord who serves Saint Christopher.

CXXIX

To whom this ballade I will give
For his wife, who in all is fair.
If such love fail most men that live,
I marvel not in my despair.
For at those jousts he won her, where
Reigned René, Sicily's King; he was
Of deed more ready, speech more rare
Than Hector, once, or Troilus.

BALLADE

Que Villon donna à un gentilhomme, nouvellement marié, pour l'envoyer à son espouse, par luy conquise à l'espée.

Au poinct du jour, que l'esprevier se bat,
Meu de plaisir et par noble coustume,
Bruyt il demaine et de joye s'esbat,
Reçoit son per et se joint à la plume:
Offrir vous vueil, à ce desir m'allume,
Joyeuse ment ce qu'aux amans bon semble.
Sachez qu'Amour l'escript en son volume,
Et c'est la fin pourquoy sommes ensemble.

Dame serez de mon cueur, sans debat,
Entierement, jusques mort me consume.
Laurier soüef qui pour mon droit combat,
Olivier franc, m'ostant toute amertume.
Raison ne veult que je desaccoustume
(Et en ce vueil avec elle m'assemble)

BALLADE

Which Villon Gave to a Newly Married Gentleman to Send to His Wife, Won By His Prowess.

*A*s in the dawn the tercel beats his wing,
*M*oved by high pride of waking from night's gloom,
*B*ringing to life his joy in everything,
*R*ousing his mate to join him, plume to plume,
*O*n this wise let desire but reillume
*J*oyously that which lovers all condone;
*S*o love decrees it in his bright volume.
*E*ven to this end are we two merged in one.

*D*ame of my heart, unrivalled in the ring
*E*ncircling us till death shall one consume,
*L*aurel you are to crown my venturing,
*O*live you are in bitterness and brume.
*R*eason demands I never shall inhume
(*E*choes my soul to reason while I run)

De vous servir, mais que je m'y accoustume,
Et c'est la fin pourquoy sommes ensemble.

Et qui plus est, quand dueil sur moy s'embat,
Par fortune qui sur moy si se fume,
Vostre doulx œil sa malice rabat,
Ne plus ne moins que le vent faict la fume.
Si ne perds pas la graine que je sume
En vostre champ, car le fruict me ressemble:
Dieu m'ordonne que le fouysse et fume;
Et c'est la fin pourquoy sommes ensemble.

ENVOI

Princesse, oyez ce que cy vous resume:
Que le mien cueur du vostre desassemble
Jà ne sera: tant de vous en presume;
Et c'est la fin pourquoy sommes ensemble.

CXXX

Item, à sire Jehan Perdryer,
Riens, n'à Françoys, son second frère.
Si m'ont-ilz voulu aydier,
Et de leurs biens faire confrère;
Combien que Françoys, mon compère,
Langues cuisans, flambans et rouges,
My commandement, my prière,
Me recommanda fort à Bourges.

Delight to serve you, but the more assume,
Even to this end are we two merged in one.

Moreover, when my sorrows round me cling
And Fortune frowns and all the world's in fume,
I look but in your eyes, and then I sing,
And all ills vanish like the wind-blown spume.
I shall not lose the seed which I enwomb
In earth that brings me fruit of girl or son:
God bids me delve until my day of doom;
Even to this end are we two merged in one.

ENVOI

Princess, hear well this burden I resume:
My heart is yours for ever, and I shun
To doubt that yours is mine this side the tomb:
Even to this end are we two merged in one.

CXXX

Item, to Sir John Perdryer, naught;
His younger brother, Frank, the same.
To me an equal aid they brought
And on their goods gave equal claim;
So much that Frank, my friend, could aim
Sharp words and fierce as fire at me,
Now hectoring, wheedling now—my fame
At Bourges he boosted valiantly.

CXXXI

Si aille veoir en Taillevent,
Ou chapitre de fricassure,
Tout au long, derrière et devant,
Lequel n'en parle jus ne sure;
Mais Macquaire, je vous asseure,
A tout le poil cuysant ung dyable
Affin que sentist bon l'arsure,
Ce Recipe *m'escript, sans fable.*

CXXXI

If one inspect the Cookery Book,
In chapters dealing with fried meat,
Throughout their length, though one should look,
There's no such gravy given to eat;
But Saint Macaire, who broiled complete
A devil with the hair on, he
(Who loved the smell of sin in heat)
Wrote out this trusty Recipe:

BALLADE

En réagal, en arsenic rocher,
En orpigment, en salpestre et chaulx vive;
En plomb boillant, pour mieulx les esmorcher;
En suif et poix, destrampez de lessive
Faicte d'estronts et de pissat de Juifve;
En lavaille de jambes à messeaulx;
En raclure de piedz et vieulx houseaulx;
En sang d'aspic et drogues venimeuses;
En fiel de loups, de regnards et blereaux,
Soient frittes ces langues envieuses!

En cervelle de chat qui hayt pescher,
Noir, et si vieil qu'il n'ait dent en gencive;
D'ung vieil mastin, qui vault bien aussi cher,
Tout enragé, en sa bave et salive;
En l'escume d'une mule poussive,
Detrenchée menu à bons ciseaulx;
En eau ou ratz plongent groings et museaulx,

BALLADE

In arsenic crystals and realgar red,
In orpiment, saltpetre, quicklime too;
And—better thus to clean—in boiling lead;
In tallow, pitch and lye, the which imbue
With excrement of some old female Jew;
In washings from the legs of men with pox;
In toejam and the scrapings of old sox;
In blood of snakes, in drugs whence men have died;
In gall of badger and of wolf and fox:
Let envious tongues be fricasseed and fried!

In brain of cat with not a tooth in head,
Black and so old that fishing must eschew;
In foam and slaver from a mastiff shed
That ran all mad and that such madness slew;
In lather of a mule with heaves—each thew
Sliced fine with scissors, head right down to hocks;
In water where rats plunge and plash like rocks,

Raines, crapauds, telz bestes dangereuses,
Serpens, lezards, et telz nobles oyseaulx,
Soient frittes ces langues envieuses!

En sublimé, dangeroux à toucher;
Et au nombril d'une couleuvre vive;
En sang qu'on mect en poylettes secher,
Chez ces barbiers, quand plaine lune arrive,
Dont l'ung est noir, l'autre plus vert que cive;
En chancre et fix, et en ces ords cuveaulx
Où nourrices essangent leurs drappeaulx;
En petits baings de filles amoureuses
(Qui ne m'entends n'a suivi les bourdeaulx),
Soient frittes ces langues envieuses!

ENVOI

Prince, passez tous ces friands morceaulx,
S'estamine n'avez, sacs our bluteaux,
Parmy le fons d'une brayes breneuses;
Mais, paravent, en estrons de pourceaulx
Soient frittes ces langues envieuses!

With frogs and toads and dangerous beasts allied,
Snakes, newts and suchlike noble birds in flocks:
Let envious tongues be fricasseed and fried!

In sublimate whereof men stand in dread;
In sweat from navels of live adders—whew!
In blood in basins drying and all dead
For leeches' use beneath the full moon—phew!—
Some being black, some green like chives; in spew
Of chancre-sores and of those filthy crocks
Where nurses wash the flood from invalids' smocks;
In little baths the love-girls lie beside
(Who knows them not knows naught of stews, by
cocks!)
Let envious tongues be fricasseed and fried!

ENVOI

Prince, pass the mustard! If you've no old frocks
Nor sacks no sifters, then from foul buttocks
Strip drawers and strain until you're satisfied;
But first in pig-dirt gathered from paddocks
Let envious tongues be fricasseed and fried!

CXXXII

Item, à maistre Jehan Courault,
Les Contredictz Franc-Gontier mande:
Quant du Tyrant séant en hault,
A cestuy-là rien ne demande;
Le Saige ne veult que contende,
Contre puissant, pouvre homme las,
Affin que ses filez ne tende,
Et que ne tresbuche en ses laqs.

CXXXIII

Gontier ne crains: il n'a nulz hommes
Et mieulx que moy n'est hérité;
Mais en ce debat cy nous sommes,
Car il loue sa pouvreté:
Estre pouvre, yver et esté,
A felicité il repute,
Ce que tiens à malheureté.
Lequel à tort? Or en dispute.

CXXXII

Item, to Master John Couraut
This counterblast to Franc-Gontier:
As for the Tyrant throned for show,
I ask no favors in my lay;
It's true the Sage bids poor men stay
From strife with stronger, to this end:
They keep from snares across the way,
Spread by the great and reverend.

CXXXIII

I fear not Gontier: he's no men
Nor more than I goes wealthily;
But in debate I've taken pen
Because he praises poverty.
Winter and summer both, says he,
It's better to be poor, he says.
I hold that's only misery.
Who's wrong? Oyez, oyez, oyez!

BALLADE

INTITULÉE: Les Contredictz de Franc-Gontier

Sur mol duvet assis, ung gras chanoine,
Lez ung brasier, en chambre bien nattée,
A son costé gisant dame Sydoine,
Blanche, tendre, pollie et attaintée:
Boire ypocras, à jour et à nuyctée,
Rire, jouer, mignoter et baiser,
Et nud à nud, pour mieulx des corps s'ayser,
Les vy tous deux, par un trou de mortaise:
Lors je congneuz que, pour dueil appaiser,
Il n'est tresor que de vivre à son aise.

Se Franc-Gontier et sa compaigne Heleine
Eussent tousjours tel douce vie hantée,
D'oignons, civotz, qui causant forte alaine.
N'en mangeassent bise crouste frottée.
Tout leur mathon, ne toute leur potée,
Ne prise ung ail, je le dy sans noysier.
S'ilz se vantent coucher soubz le rosier,
Ne vault pas mieulx lict costoyé de chaise?

BALLADE ENTITLED: COUNTERBLAST TO FRANC-GONTIER.

Deep in soft down there lay a paunchy priest
Within a warm room strewn in brave array,
While fair and young Sidonia's white breast
And gleaming body on the same couch lay;
They drank spiced wine all night long and all day,
Laughed, wantoned, fondled, kissed beneath the nose,
All skin to skin that naught might interpose—
'Twas through a crack I watched these obsequies:
Since when I know that, seeing how sorrow flows,
There is no treasure but to live at ease.

If Gontier and his Helen at such feast
Had always been so happy and so gay,
Their bread had not been garnished, at the least,
With onions fit to force the face away.
Not all their cheese nor all their curds and whey
Are worth a pinch of garlic, as one knows.
And if they boast of love beneath the rose,
Are bed and chair inimical to these?

Qu'en dictes-vous? Faut il à ce-muser?
Il n'est tresor que de vivre à son aise.

De gros pain bis vivent, d'orge, d'avoine,
Et boivent eau, tout au long de l'année
Tour les oyseaulx d'icy en Babyloine
A tel escot une seule journée
Ne me tiendroient, non une matinée.
Or s'esbate, de par Dieu, Franc-Gontier,
Helène o luy, soubz le bel esglantier;
Si bien leur est, n'ay cause qu'il me poise;
Mais, quoy qu'il soit du laboureux mestier,
Il n'est tresor que de vivre à son aise.

ENVOI

Prince, jugez, pour tous nous accorder;
Quant est à moy, mais qu'à nul n'en desplaise,
Petit enfant, j'ay ouy recorder
Qu'il n'est tresor que de vivre à son aise.

CXXXIV

Item, pour ce que sçait la Bible,
Mademoyselle de Bruyères,

What say you? Is he in some rut of pose?
There is no treasure but to live at ease.

On barley bread or oat, not made with yeast,
Washed down with water all year round—I say,
The birds from here to Babylon in the East
Could not delude me thus to pause and play,
Not so much, no, as one swift matinée.
If—by the Lord!—Franc-Gontier merely chose
With Helen under eglantine to close,
I'd bid them frolic while they'd tongues to tease;
But that one on oneself real toil impose—
There is no treasure but to live at ease!

ENVOI

Prince, be you judge and reconcile us foes.
For me, though I would not therein displease,
From boyhood I have heard, in rhyme and prose,
There is no treasure but to live at ease.

CXXXIV

Item, she knowing her Bible so—
Madame de Bruyères—be it hers

Donne prescher, hors l'Evangile,
A elle et à ses bachelières,
Pour retraire ces villotières
Qui ont le bec si affilé,
Mais que ce soit hors cymetières,
Trop bien au marché au filé.

To preach—without the Gospels, though—
To her and her she-bachelors,
Refreshing thus those milked-out whores,
Who are so nimble of the tongue;
But not in graveyard corridors—
The Tenderloin where hams are hung.

BALLADE DES FEMMES DE PARIS

Quoy qu'on tient belles langagières
Florentines, Veniciennes,
Assez pour estre messaigières,
Et mesmement les anciennes;
Mais, soient Lombardes, Rommaines,
Genevoises, à mes perilz,
Piedmontoises, Savoysiennes,
Il n'est bon bec que de Paris.

De très beau parler tiennent chaires,
Ce dit-on, les Napolitaines,
Et que sont bonnes cacquetoeres
Allemandes et Bruciennes;
Soient Grecques, Egyptiennes,
De Hongrie ou d'autre pays,
Espaignolles ou Castellannes,
Il n'est bon bec que de Paris.

BALLADE
OF THE WOMEN OF PARIS

Oh, some are good palaverers—
Venetians, aye, and Florentines—
To serve as youthful messengers,
Nay, even as ancient go-betweens,
Yet, be they Lombards, Roman queans,
Genevans—though my peril there is—
Savoyards, Piedmontese—it means
There's no good gossip save at Paris.

They do right well as lecturers,
The Neapolitans—thus one gleans—
And they are all fine jabberers,
Germans and Prussians on their greens;
But Greeks or Egyptians or Slovenes,
Or whatsoever kind your care is,
Spaniards, Castilians—all this means
There's no good gossip save at Paris.

Brettes, Suysses, n'y sçavent guères,
Ne Gasconnes et Tholouzaines;
Du Petit-Pont deux harangères
Les concluront, et les Lorraines,
Anglesches ou Callaissiennes,
(Ay-je beaucoup de lieux compris?)
Picardes, de Valenciennes;
Il n'est bon bec que de Paris.

ENVOI

Prince, aux dames parisiennes
De bien parler donnez le prix;
Quoy qu'on die d'Italiennes,
Il n'est bon bec que de Paris.

CXXXV

Regarde-m'en deux, trois, assises
Sur le bas du ply de leurs robes,
En ces monstiers, en ces eglises;
Tire t'en près, et ne t'en hobes;
Tu trouveras là que Macrobes
Oncques ne fist tels jugemens;
Entens: quelque chose en desrobes;
Ce sont tous beaulx enseignemens.

CXXXVI

Item, et au mont de Montmartre,
Qui est ung lieu moult ancien,
Je lui donne et adjoincts le tertre
Qu'on dit le mont Valerien;

Bretons and Swiss are mutterers;
The Gascon simpers, Toulousian preens;
On the Little Bridge two fish-peddlers
Could scold them into tearful teens;
Lorrainers, English, Calaisians—scenes
Enough have I rhymed where all such ware is?
Picardians then? The answer means
There's no good gossip save at Paris.

ENVOI

Prince, to the Paris dames the deans
Must give the prize while language varies.
To speak of Italians merely means
There's no good gossip save at Paris.

CXXXV

See where they sit, by twos and threes,
Upon the plackets of their dress,
In churches and in nunneries;
Steal near and listen, motionless;
You'll hear Macrobius' thoughtfulness
Outdone in wisdom and in wit,
And many a secret you'll possess:
There's rare meat in the whole of it.

CXXXVI

Item, to Montmartre—on the whole
This is a very ancient hill—
I give and join the little knoll
They call Valerian; and I will,

Et, oultre plus, d'ung quartier d'an,
Du pardon qu'apportay de Romme,
Sy yra maint bon chestien,
En l'abbaye où il n'entre homme.

CXXXVII

Item, valetz et chambrières
De bons hostelz (rien ne me nuyst),
Faisans tartes, flans et goyères,
Et grant rallias à minuict . . .
Riens n'y font sept pintes ne huict,
Tant que gisent seigneur et dame;
Puis après, sans mener grant bruyt,
Je leur ramentoy le jeu d'asne.

CXXXVIII

Item, et à filles de bien,
Qui ont pères, mères et antes,
Par m'ame! je ne donne rien;
Tout ont eu varletz et servantes;
Elles seront de pou contentes.
Grant bien leur feissent maintz lopins,
Aux povres filles advenantes,
Qui se perdent aux Jacopins.

CXXXIX

Aux Célestins et aux Chartreux,
Quoy que vie meinent estroicte,
Si ont-ilz largement entre eulx,
Dont povres filles ont souffrette:

Moreover, three months' use and fill
Of my indulgence brought from Rome,
That Christian pilgrims do no ill
In the Abbey that is no man's home.

CXXXVII

To valets and to chambermaids
Of mansions grand (my loss is light),
Pheasants, tarts, custards, marmalades,
And kitchen-gambols at midnight . . .
Put seven or eight good pints to flight
When lord and lady bedward pass;
And then, in silence, but with might,
I recommend the game of the ass.

CXXXVIII

Item, to good girls, who are taught
By fathers, mothers, aye, and aunts,
Upon my soul, I give them naught:
All's gone to men- and maid-servants.
This little must suffice their wants:
Let them give tarts and dainties then
To all poor girls, itinerants,
Thrown over by the clergymen.

CXXXIX

To Celestines, Carthusians too,
Who lead so frugal lives, and yet,
Among themselves, are well-to-do,
The while poor girls are deep in debt,

Tesmoing Jaqueline et Perrette,
Et Isabeau, qui dit: Enné!
Puis qu'elles ont telle disette,
A peine en seroit-on damné?

CXL

Item, à la grosse Margot,
Très doulce face et pourtraicture,
Foy que doy Brelare Bigod,
Assez devote creature.
Je l'ayme de propre nature,
Et elle moy, la doulce sade.
Qui la trouvera d'adventure,
Qu'on luy lise ceste Ballade.

As witness Jacqueline, Perrette,
And Isabel, who says "My word!"—
Since they've such pressing need, who'll get
Condemned for helping them? Absurd!

CXL

Item, to Margot, who is fat,
But has sweet ways and countenance—
By 'r Lord and by God! and with that
She's pious too, by sufferance—
I love her well, in pure romance,
And she loves me, the dear old shad.
If one should meet with her, by chance,
Let him read out this next ballade.

BALLADE

De Villon et de la Grosse Margot

Se j'ayme et sers la belle de bon haict,
M'en devez-vous tenir à vil ne sot?
Elle a en soy des biens à fin souhaict.
Pour son amour ceings bouclier et passot.
Quand viennent gens, je cours et happe un pot:
Au vin m'en voys, sans demener grand bruyt.
Je leur tendz eau, frommage, pain et fruict,
S'ilz payent bien, je leur dy que bien stat:
"Retournez cy, quand vous serez en ruyt,
En ce bourdel où tenons nostre estat!"

Mais, tost après, il y a grant deshait,
Quand sans argent s'en vient coucher Margot;
Veoir ne la puis; mon cueur à mort la hait.
Sa robe prens, demy-ceinct et surcot:
Si luy prometz qu'ilz tiendront pour l'escot.
Par les costez si se prend, l'antechrist,

BALLADE

Of Villon and Fat Margot

Because I love and serve her of my heart,
Must you then call me villain, fool or sot?
Her love more fills my need than any art,
Hence I bear sword and shield for this harlot.
When men come here, I hop and hand the pot,
Run to fetch wine, nor grumble nor dispute,
And serve them water, cheese and bread and fruit;
If they are paying well, I expatiate,
And cry, "Return when you are roused to root
Here in this brothel where we hold our state!"

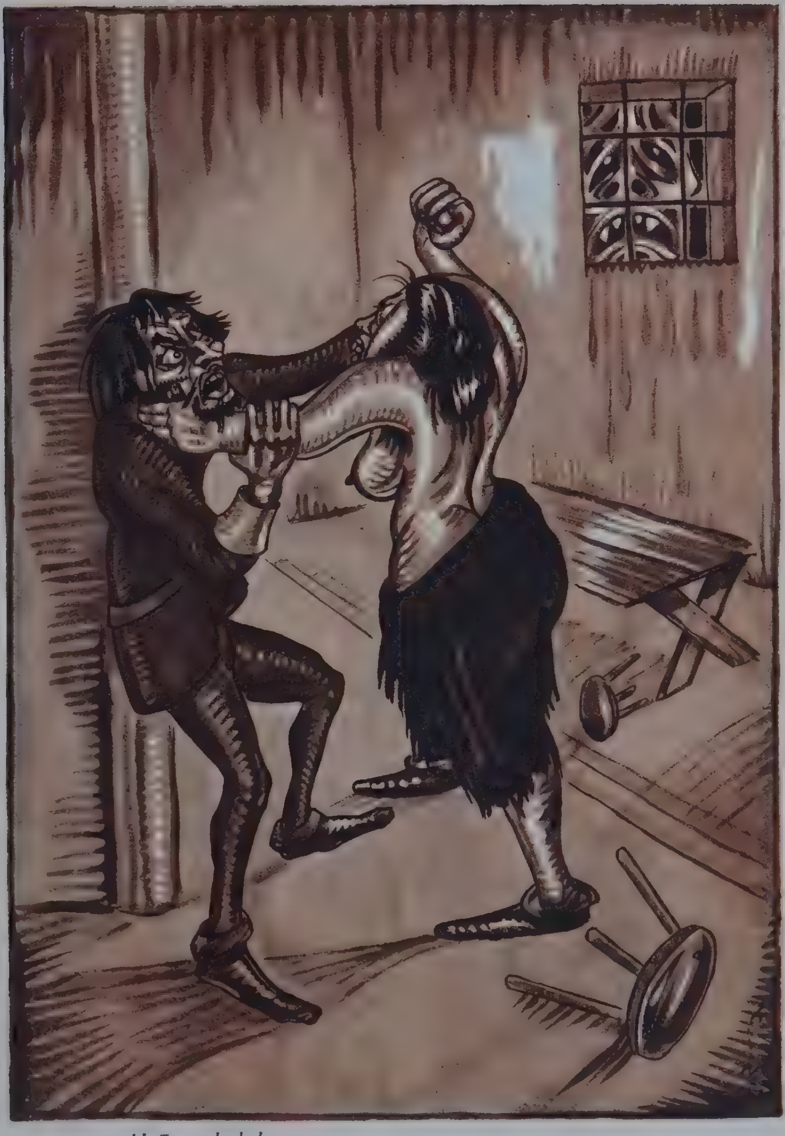
But soon thereafter calm is driven apart
When silverless comes Margot to our cot:
I hate her then like bitter death and swart,
And snatch robe, cloak and bonnet knot from knot,
Swearing to pawn them or to sell the lot.
She beats my ribs, this antichrist, to refute,

Crie, et jure par la mort Jesuchrist,
Que non fera. Lors, j'enpongne ung esclat,
Dessus le nez luy en fais ung escript,
En ce bourdel où tenons nostre estat.

Puis paix se faict, et me lasche ung gros pet,
Plus enflée qu'ung venimeux scarbot.
Riant, m'assiet son poing sur mon sommet,
Gogo me dit, et me fiert le jambot.
Tous deux yvres, dormons comme ung sabot;
Et, au reveil, quand le ventre luy bruyt,
Monte sur moy, qu'el ne gaste son fruit.
Soubz elle geins; plus qu'ung aiz me faict plat;
De paillarder tout elle me destruict,
En ce bourdel où tenons nostre estat.

ENVOI

V *ente, gresle, gelle, j'ay mon pain cuict!*
J *e suis paillard, la paillarde me duit.*
L *equel vault mieulx? chascun bien s'entresuit.*
L *'ung l'autre vault: c'est à mau chat mau rat.*
O *rdure amons, ordure nous affuyt.*
N *ous deffuyons honneur, il nous deffuyt,*
En ce bourdel où tenons nostre estat.



. . . until I end debate
When my good fist to her big nose I shoot . . .

And swears by God's death I shall take no loot
From gear of hers—until I end debate
When my good fist to her big nose I shoot,
Here in this brothel where we hold our state.

Then, peace being made, she looses one fat fart,
More flatulent than venomous bug, and hot,
And laughs and grips my most upstanding part,
Calls me soft names and hugs me, sans culotte.
Then we two sleep, sodden as shoes, God wot,
Till morning, when her big bowels making bruit,
She mounts me, being with child, and far from mute,
I groan and writhe, pinned down beneath such weight
That soon of lechery I am destitute,
Here in this brothel where we hold our state.

ENVOI

V eer, wind, hail, frost, my bread is baked to suit:
I am her pimp and she my prostitute.
L ittle we lose: each is of ill repute.
L ean cat to lean rat, one's the other's mate.
O rdure we love and ordure's our pursuit;
N o chase of honor shall we prosecute
Here in this brothel where we hold our state.

CXLI

Item, à Marion l'Ydolle
Et la grand Jehanne de Bretaigne,
Donne tenir publique escolle
Où l'escolier le maistre enseigne.
Lieu n'est où ce marché ne tienne,
Sinon en la geolle de Mehun;
De quoy je dy: Fy de l'enseigne,
Puis que l'ouvrage est si commun!

CXLII

Item, à Noë le Jolys,
Autre chose je ne luy donne
Fors plein poing d'osiers frez cueilliz
En mon jardin: je l'abandonne.
Chastoy est une belle aulmosne;
Ame n'en doit estre marry.
Unze vingtz coups lui en ordonne,
Par les mains de maistre Henry.

CXLIII

Item, ne sçay que à l'Hostel-Dieu
Donner, n'aux povres hospitaulx;
Bourdes n'ont icy temps ne lieu,
Car povres gens ont assez maulx.
Chascun leur envoye leurs aulx.
Les Mandians ont eu mon oye;
Au fort, ilz en auront les os:
A menues gens menue monnoye.

CXLI

Item, to Marion the Doll
And the tall Joan of Brittany,
My leave to hold a public school
Where pupil teaches teacher—see?
There's no place where this may not be,
Except in Meung jail; wherefore
I say there's no sign needed: we
Will find this well of well known lore.

CXLII

Item, to Noah le Joli,
I give him nothing save to split
A fresh fistful of withes all free
In garden mine: I abandon it.
Correction is such alms, to-wit,
As no soul should be grieved to gain.
Eleven score lashes by the fit
Hard hands of Henry I ordain.

CXLIII

I know not what for Hôtel Dieu
And poor hospitals to propose;
Folly's no place on their menu:
Sick men have ills enough, God knows.
Let each but see some garlic goes.
The Mendicants have cooked my goose;
But they shall have the bones to nose.
Poor men, poor money when it's loose.

CXLIV

Item, je donne à mon barbier,
Qui se nomme Colin Galerne,
Près voysin d'Angelot l'Herbier,
Ung gros glasson . . . Prins où? En Marne.
Affin qu'à son ayse s'yverne.
De l'estomach le tienne près.
Se l'yver ainsi se gouverne,
Il n'aura chaud l'esté d'après.

CXLV

Item, rien aux Enfans-Trouvez;
Mais les perduz fault que console.
Se doivent estre retrouvez,
Par droict, chez Marion l'Ydolle,
Une leçon de mon escolle
Leur liray, qui ne dure guière.
Teste n'ayant dure ne folle,
Mais escoutent: c'est la dernière!

CXLIV

Item, I give my barber chorist,
Who calls himself Colin Galerne
And lives near Angelot the florist,
An ice-floe . . . taken whence? The Marne.
To keep him cool this winter's turn,
Upon his stomach held, or side.
If this advice he does not spurn,
He'll not be warm next summertide.

CXLV

Naught to the Foundlings, I'll be bound,
But yet the Lost one must console,
Who should, of right, be quickly found
In house of Marion the Doll.
I'll read a lesson of my school,
Not long nor dully overcast;
Turn not deaf ears, like any fool,
But hear me through: it is the last!

BELLE LEÇON
DE VILLON AUX ENFANTS PERDUS

Beaux enfans, vous perdez la plus
Belle rose de vo chapeau;
Mes clers, apprenans comme glu,
Se vous allez à Montpippeau
Ou à Ruel, gardez la peau:
Car, pour s'esbatre en ces deux lieux,
Cuydant que vaulsist le rappeau,
La perdit Colin de Cayeulx.

Ce n'est pas ung jeu de trois mailles,
Où va corps, et peut-estre l'ame:
S'on perd, rien n'y sont repentailles,
Qu'on ne meure à honte et diffame;
Et qui gaigne, n'a pas à femme
Dido la royne de Cartage.
L'homme est donc bien fol et infame,
Qui, pour si peu, couche tel gage.

GOOD COUNSEL
OF VILLON TO THOSE OF FORLORN HOPE

Lads, a rose may be lost to you,
The fairest rose of your chapeau;
My boys, with fingers all like glue,
If ever you fare to Montpippeau
Or Ruel, watch your step, you know,
Because, for gambols there one day,
Believing he could beat the throw,
Colin of Cayeulx lost the play.

This is no boys' game, believe me;
You risk your body, aye, your soul:
Lose, and remorse will not set free
Nor shame deliver you out of dole;
Win, and you shall not gain such goal
As Dido's Carthaginian couch.
Surely the man is worse than fool
Who, for so little, lays so much.

Qu'ung chascun encore m'escouté:
On dit, et il est verité,
Que charretée se boyt toute,
Au feu l'yver, au bois l'esté.
S'argent avez, il n'est enté;
Mais le despendez tost et viste.
Qui en voyez-vous herité?
Jamais mal acquest ne proffite.

And thus again, that all may hear:
They say, and it is truth they say,
A load of wine will disappear
By fire in winter, woods in May.
If coin you have, it grows not, nay,
But soon is wasted, all you get.
What do you find in all this, pray?
Ill gain was never profit yet.

BALLADE DE BONNE DOCTRINE A CEUX DE MAUVAISE VIE

Car ou soyes porteur de bulles,
Pipeur ou hazardeur de dez,
Tailleur de faulx coings, tu te brusles,
Comme ceux qui sont eschaudez,
Traistres pervers, de foy vuydez;
Soyes larron, ravis ou pilles:
Où en va l'acquest, que cuydez?
Tout aux tavernes et aux filles.

Ryme, raille, cymballe, luttes,
Comme folz, faintis, eshontez;
Farce, broille, joue des flustes;
Fais, ès villes et ès cités,
Fainctes, jeux et moralitez;
Gaigne au berlan, au glic, aux quilles:
Où s'en va tout? Or escoutez:
Tout aux tavernes et aux filles.

De telz ordures te recullles;
Laboure, fauche champs et prez;
Serz et panse chevaulx et mulles,
S'aucunement tu n'es lettrez;

BALLADE OF GOOD DOCTRINE TO THOSE OF EVIL LIFE

Whether you sell indulgences,
Or cheat with loaded dice your way,
Or make false coin, you'll burn no less
Than those they boil—who dare betray
Country and king in war-time; nay,
Be thieves, and rape and rob the gulls:
Where go all your gains? What say?
All to the taverns and the trulls.

Rhyme, rail, beat cymbals, lutes; profess
Like shameless clowns that you are gay;
Try farces, dramas, flutes; progress
Through towns and cities day by day
In mystery or moral play;
At cards or nine-pins rack your skulls:
And where goes all? Now hear, I pray:
All to the taverns and the trulls.

Ah, turn you from such sordidness;
Toil in the fields and rake the hay;
Serve mares and mules if you confess
To no such brains as scholars may;

Assez auras, se prens en grez;
Mais, se chanvre broyes ou tilles,
Où tend ton labour qu'as ouvrez?
Tout aux tavernes et aux filles.

ENVOI

Chausses, pourpoinctz esguilletez,
Robes, et toutes vos drapilles,
Ains que soient usez, vous portez
Tout aux tavernes et aux filles.

CXLVI

A vous parle, compaings de galles,
Qui estes de tous bons accors;
Gardez-vous tous de ce mau hasles
Qui noircist gens quand ils sont mortz.
Eschevez-le, c'est ung mal mors;
Passez-vous-en mieulx que pourrez;
Et, pour Dieu, soyez tous recors
Qu'une fois viendra que mourrez.

CXLVII

Item, je donne au Quinze-Vingtz,
Qu'autant vauldroit nommer Trois-Cens,
De Paris, non pas de Provins,
Car à eulx tenu je me sens.
Ilz auront, et je m'y consens,
Sans les estuis, mes grans lunettes,
Pour mettre à part, aux Innocens,
Les gens de bien des deshonnestes.

It's plenty if you'll save your pay;
But no! Though you beat hemp from hulls,
Where tends it all? Without delay,
All to the taverns and the trulls.

ENVOI

Hose, coats, in brave and bright array,
And robes, and all a wise man culls,
You bear, before they've time to fray,
All to the taverns and the trulls.

CXLVI

Friends of my days of youth and fun,
Who made so merry at board and bed,
Oh, keep you from that evil sun
Which blackens men when they are dead!
Avoid so ill a death and dread;
In seemlier fashion meet decay;
And yet, for God's love, hold in head
That each of you shall die some day!

CXLVII

Item, I give the Fifteen-Score
("Three Hundred" would have served the sense)
Of Paris, not Provence (the more
Because they've lent me sapience),
To have, of my benevolence
(Without the case), my spectacles,
To separate, at Innocents,
The good folk from the ne'er-do-wells.

CXLVIII

Ici n'y a ne rys ne jeu.
Que leur vault avoir eu chevances,
N'en grans lictz de parement geu,
Engloutir vin, engrossir panses,
Mener joye, festes et danses,
Et de ce prest estre à toute heure?
Tantost faillent telles plaisances,
Et la coulpe si en demeure.

CXLIX

Quand je considère ces testes
Entassées en ces charniers,
Tous furent maistres des requestes,
Ou tous de la Chambre aux Deniers
Ou tous furent porte-paniers;
Autant puis l'ung que l'autre dire,
Car, d'evesques ou lanterniers,
Je n'y congnois rien à redire.

CL

Et icelles qui s'inclinoient
Unes contre autres en leurs vies;
Desquelles les unes regnoient,
Des autres craintes et servies,
Là les voy toutes assouvies,
Ensemble en ung tas pesle-mesle.
Seigneuries leur sont ravies;
Clerc ne maistre ne s'y appelle.

CXLVIII

There is no laughter here, nor play.
What is it now they gathered goods
And in great valanced bedsteads lay,
Drank wine and fed on dainty foods?
What now they revelled in their moods,
Who, at all hours, were near this pit?
All joy is gone from turpitudes,
And only the sin remains of it.

CXLIX

When I consider all the heads
Within these charnels piled and pent,
How some have been great lords, whose threads
Pulled puppets and gave government,
Now with the skulls of laborers blent,
Each like another—what's to say?
Bishop or babbler, spurned and spent,
There's no rank in these bones today.

CL

For here all those who bent and bowed
One to another, in their time,
Of whom some ruled while others cowed
Body and soul to creed or crime —
Glutted at last, here in the grime
Huddled in many a heap, pell-mell,
Lordships are lost that seemed sublime,
And clerk from master none can tell.

CLI

Or sont-ilz mortz, Dieu ayt leur ames,
Quant est des corps, ils sont pourriz.
Ayent esté seigneurs ou dames,
Souef et tendrement nourriz
De cresme, fromentée ou riz,
Leurs os sont declinez en pouldre,
Auxquelz ne chault d'esbat, ne riz . . .
Plaise au doulx Jesus les absouldre!

CLII

Aux trespassez je fais ce lays,
Et icelluy je communique
A regentz, courtz, sièges et plaids,
Hayneurs d'avarice l'inique,
Lesquelz pour la chose publique
Se seichont les os et les corps:
De Dieu et de Sainct Dominique
Soient absolz, quand ilz seront morts.

CLIII

Item, donne à maistre Lomer,
Comme extraict que je suis de fée,
Qu'il soit bien amé: mais d'amer
Fille en chief ou femme coëffée,
Jà n'en ayt la teste eschauffée,
Et qu'il ne luy couste une noix,
Faire au soir cent fois la faffée,
En despit d'Auger le Danois.

CLI

Now they are dead, God give them rest
In soul—their bodies are no more.
Ladies and lords, they had the best
Of all life offered—gold in store,
And delicate, dainty foods—before
Their proud bones crumbled into dust.
They have forgot the loves of yore . . .
Pray God that he forget the lust!

CLII

So to the dead I make this lay,
The which I publish for the sake
Of all those men who hate the way
Of vicious avarice, and who make
Their lives a guard to watch and wake,
Wearing their bodies to the thread.
God and the good Saint Dominick take
Their sins away, when they are dead!

CLIII

Item, I give Master Lomer
(Since I am born of fairy's blood)
That he be well loved, but prefer
Not high-tired dame nor girl in snood,
Holding his brain from passion's mood,
And that it cost him not one nut
Each night a hundred times at stud,
Despite Dane Holgar thereabout.

CLIV

Item, rien à Jacques Cardon,
Car je n'ay rien pour luy honneste,
Non pas que le jette à bandon,
Sinon cette bergeronnette:
S'elle eust le chant Marionnette,
Faict por Marion la Peau-Tarde,
Ou de: Ouvrez vostre huys, Guillemette,
Elle allast bien à la moustarde.

CLIV

To James Cardon be nothing borne,
Because there's nothing he should get
(Not that I wish to show him scorn),
Except this pastoral: if set
To some such air as *Marionnette,*
Made for Marion Old-Skin, say,
Or *Open Wide Your Door, Wilmette,*
It might be all the mustard—eh?

LAYS

Au retour de dure prison,
Où j'ay laissé presque la vie,
Se fortune a sur moy envie,
Jugez s'elle fait mesprison!
Il me semble que, par raison,
Elle deust bien estre assouvie,
Au retour.

Cecy plain est de desraison,
Qui vueille que de tout desvie;
Plaise à Dieu que l'ame ravie
En soit, lassus, en sa maison,
Au retour!

CLV

Item, donne aux amants enfermes,
Oultre le lay Alain Chartier,
A leurs chevetz, de pleurs et larmes
Trestout fin plain ung benoistier,
Et ung petit brin d'esglantier,
Et tout temps verd, pour gouppillon,
Pourveu qu'ilz diront ung Psaultier
Pour l'ame du pouvre Villon.

LAY

When I return from prison cell,
Wherein I've come so near my end,
If Fortune's evil toward me tend,
Judge whether hate of me impel!
I cannot think but that her spell
Is broken and her ways will mend,
When I return.

Beyond all reason is the knell
That tolls for me. If death portend,
O God, grant thou my spirit rend
The fetters and the bonds of Hell,
When I return!

CLV

Item, to lovers sick with scorn,
Beside Alain Chartier's good lay,
At bedside, full of tears forlorn,
A basin and a little spray
Of eglantine kept green as May,
For aspergill, all thereupon
Provided that they sometimes say
A rosary for poor Villon.

CLVI

Item, à maistre Jacques James,
Qui se tue d'amasser biens,
Donne fiancer tant de femmes
Qu'il vouldra; mais d'espouser, riens.
Pour qui amasse-il? Pour les siens.
Il ne plainct fors que ses morceaulx;
Ce qui fut aux truyes, je tiens,
Qu'il doit de droit estre aux pourceaulx.

CLVII

Item, le Camus Seneschal,
Qui une fois paya mes debtes,
En recompense, mareschal,
Pour ferrer oës et canettes . . .
Je luy envoye ces sornettes,
Pour soy desennuyer; combien,
Si veult, face-en des alumettes.
De bien chanter s'ennuye-on bien.

CLVIII

Item, au Chevalier du Guet
Je donne deux beaulx petitz pages,
Philippot et le gros Marquet,
Qui ont servy, dont sont plus sages,
La plus grant partie de leurs aages,
Tristan, prevost des mareschaulx.
Hélas, s'ilz sont cassez de gaiges,
Aller leur fauldra tous deschaulx!

CLVI

Item, to Master Jamie James,
Who wears his life out gathering gold,
Let him wed none but have the names
Betrothed of ladies manifold.
For whom so toils he? Be it told,
It's for his own he gleans the bogs.
That which is fit for sows, I hold,
Should of all right be given to hogs.

CLVII

Item, the pug-nosed seneschal,
Who paid, upon a time, my debts,
I make him blacksmith, to marshall
And shoe geese, ducks and suchlike pets . . .
Also, I send him these verselets
For his amusement, though ere long
He may have used them for spillets.
One tires likewise of better song.

CLVIII

Item, to Captain of the Watch
I give two pretty little pages—
Phil and Fat Marquet—and avouch
That they have served—as wise as sages—
Through greater part of both their ages,
Tristan, the Provost of the Smiths.
Alas, if they should lose their wages,
I fear they'd go unshod as wraiths.

CLIX

Item, au Chappelain je laisse
Ma chapelle à simple tonsure,
Chargée d'une seiche messe,
Où il ne fault pas grand lecture.
Resigné luy eusse ma cure,
Mais point ne veult de charge d'ames;
De confesser, ce dit, n'a cure,
Sinon chambrières et dames.

CLX

Pour ce que sçait bien mon entente,
Jehan de Calays, honnorable homme,
Qui ne me veit des ans à trente,
Et ne sçait comment je me nomme,
De tout ce Testament, en somme,
S'auceune y a difficulté,
Oster jusqu'au rez d'une pomme
Je luy en donne faculté.

CLXI

De le gloser et commenter,
De le diffinir ou prescripre,
Diminuer ou augmenter;
De le canceller ou transcripre
De sa main, ne sceust-il escripre;
Interpreter, et donner sens,
A son plaisir, meilleur ou pire;
A tout ceci je m'y consens.

CLIX

Now to my chaplain let there pass
My simple-tonsure chapel—sure,
To celebrate a thirsty mass
He'll need no further nunciature.
To him shall go, with this, my cure,
Though not at cure of souls he aims;
To shrive, they say, he can't endure,
Save it be chambermaids and dames.

CLX

To one who'll understand my fears,
John de Calais, a worthy man,
Who's seen me not in thirty years
And never knew the name I am,
This Testament, each epigram.
If one but quarrel about some whim,
To pare as apples are for jam,
Authority I give to him.

CLXI

To make his glosses and comments,
Define, prescribe, proscribe or curse,
Diminish or augment contents,
Or cancel or transcribe or nurse,
In his own hand or hands diverse;
Interpret and explain the wit;
As he shall please, for better, worse,
He's my consent to all of it.

CLXII

Et s'aucun, dont n'ay congnoissance,
Estoit allé de mort à vie,
Audict Calais donne puissance.
Affin que l'ordre soit suyvie
Et mon ordonnance assouvie,
Que ceste aulmosne ailleurs transporte,
Sans se l'appliquer par envie;
A son ame je m'en rapporte.

CLXIII

Item, j'ordonne à Saincte-Avoye,
Et non ailleurs, ma sepulture;
Et, affin que chascun me voye,
Non pas en chair, mais en paincture,
Que l'on tire mon estature
D'ancre, s'il ne coustoit trop cher.
De tumbel? Rein; je n'en ay cure,
Car il greveroit le plancher.

CLXIV

Item, vueil qu'autour de ma fosse
Ce que s'ensuyt, sans autre histoire,
Soit escript, en lettre assez grosse;
Et qui n'auroit point d'escriptoire,
De charbon soit, ou pierre noire,
Sans en rien entamer le plastre:
Au moins sera de moy memoire
Telle qu'il est d'ung bon folastre.

CLXII

If some have passed, unknown to me,
To everlasting life through death,
I give Calais the power to see
That all is ordered well forthwith,
My dispositions make to kith,
And to adjust or readjust,
Nor misappropriate, on his faith.
In all to his great soul I trust.

CLXIII

Item, Saint Avoye's chapel be,
None else, my place of sepulture;
And that all men who come may see
My flesh, as 'twas, in tablature,
Let one there limn my portraiture
In ink, if cost be not too sore.
For monument? I'll none procure;
It would but cumber up the floor.

CLXIV

Item, I'll have my grave above
This following, nor other thing,
Written in letters large enough;
And if there be no ink, then bring
Carbon or coal for lettering,
But save the plaster of the wall:
At least such sorry fame should cling
As to a good mad fool may fall.

CLXV

CY GIST ET DORT EN CE SOLLIER,
QU'AMOUR OCCIST DE SON RAILLON,
UNG POUVRE PETIT ESCOLLIER,
QUI FUT NOMMÈ FRANÇOIS VILLON
ONCQUES DE TERRE N'EUT SILLON.
IL DONNA TOUT, CHASCUN LE SCET:
TABLE, TRETTEAULX, PAIN, CORBILLON.
POUR DIEU, DICTES-EN CE VERSET.

RONDEAU

Repos eternel donne à cil
Lumièe, clarté, perpétuelle,
Qui vaillant plat ny escuelle
N'eut oncques, n'ung brin de percil.
Il fut rez, chef, barbe, sourcil,
Comme ung navet qu'on ree et pelle.
Repos eternel donne à cil.

Rigueur le transmit en exil,
Et luy frappa au cul la pelle,
Nonobstant qu'il dist: J'en appelle,
Qui n'est pas terme trop subtil.
Repos eternel donne à cil.

CLXV

HERE LIES AND SLEEPS IN THIS LONE GRAVE
ONE SLAIN BY LOVE'S BRIGHT LANCE, ANON,
A POOR, SMALL, POET, CLERK AND KNAVE,
WHOM MEN ONCE CALLED FRANCIS VILLON.
NO LAND WAS HIS TO REST UPON.
HE GAVE ALL ELSE AWAY BY WHIM:
BENCH, TABLE, BASKET, BREAD, ALL GONE.
FOR GOD'S LOVE, SAY THIS VERSE FOR HIM!

RONDEAU

Repose eternal give on high
In truth and never-ending light,
To one who'd neither plate nor mite
Of parsley, nor a coin to buy.
Hair, beard or eyebrows none could spy,
Bare as a turnip peeled outright,
Repose eternal give on high.

Destiny smote him hip and thigh,
At home or exiled, and his plight
No *"I appeal!"* made ever bright—
A word not subtle when men die.
Repose eternal give on high.

CLXVI

Item, je vueil qu'on sonne à branle
Le gros Beffray, qui n'est de voire;
Combien que cueur n'est qui ne tremble,
Quand de sonner est à son erre.
Saulvé a mainte belle terre,
Le temps passé, chascun le sçait:
Fussent gens d'armes ou tonnerre,
Au son de luy tout mal cessoit.

CLXVII

Les sonneurs auront quatre miches;
Et se c'est peu, demy-douzaine,
Autant qu'en donnent les plus riches;
Mais ilz seront de sainct Estienne.
Vollant est homme de grant peine:
L'ung en sera. Quand j'y regarde,
Il en vivra une sepmaine.
Et l'autre? Au fort, Jehan de la Garde.

CLXVIII

Pour tout ce fournir et parfaire
J'ordonne mes executeurs,
Auxquelz faict bon avoir affaire,
Et contentent bien leurs debteurs.
Ilz ne sont pas trop grans venteurs,
Et ont bien de quoy, Dieu mercys!
De ce faict seront directeurs . . .
Escripts: je t'en nommeray six.

CLXVI

Item, I will they toll for me
The great bell of the Belfry tower—
Iron, far-sounding, bellowing, free—
How roll his tones through borough and
bower!
How, of old time, when hearts would cower
For thundered battles and sieges grim,
Armies and kings and all their power
Have heard the valorous voice of him!

CLXVII

The ringers shall have four loaves each;
If that's too few, a half dozen,
As much as give the very rich;
But they'll be loaves of Saint Stephen.
Vollant's a poor man, downtrodden,
Let him be one. With this reward
He'll live a week or more. But then
The other? Why, John of the Garde.

CLXVIII

All this to furnish and perfect,
I order my executors—
Good honest dealers and direct,
Who satisfy their creditors,
Boast little to inferiors,
And have their recompense, thank God!
These men shall act for me, of course . . .
Write: I will name six, though that's odd!

CLXIX

C'est maistre Martin Bellefaye,
Lieutenant du cas criminel.
Qui sera l'autre? J'y pensoye:
Ce sera sire Colombel.
S'il luy plaist et il lui est bel,
Il entreprendra ceste charge.
Et l'autre? Michel Jouvenel.
Ces trois seulz, et pour tous, j'en charge.

CLXX

Mais, au cas qu'ils s'en excusassent,
En redoubtant les premiers frais,
Ou totalement recussassent,
Ceulx qui s'ensuivent cy-après
J'institue, gens de bien très,
Philip Bruneau, noble escuyer,
Et l'autre, son voysin d'emprès,
Cy est maistre Jacques Raguyer.

CLXXI

Et l'autre, maistre Jaques James,
Trois hommes de bien et d'honneur,
Desirans de saulver leurs ames,
Et doubtans Dieu Nostre Seigneur.
Plustot y metteront du leur,
Que ceste ordonnance ne baillent.
Point n'auront de contrerooleur,
Mais à leur seul plaisir en taillent.

CLXIX

One's Master Martin Bellefaye,
In criminal cases, King's Counsel.
Who shall be next? I think I'll say
That it shall be Squire Colombel.
If he but will, I've named him well
To undertake this, by and large.
The third man? Michael Juvenel.
These three alone, in all, I charge.

CLXX

Yet in event they hesitate
Because the costs must be defrayed,
Or quite decline to officiate,
Then be the ensuing names arrayed:
I here appoint—men of fine grade—
Phillip Bruneau, that noble squire,
And his near neighbor stout and staid,
James Raguyer of the self-same shire.

CLXXI

The third is Master Jamie James;
Three men of honor and of worth,
All anxious to escape Hell's flames
By serving God upon this earth.
They'd rather bring their own to dearth
Than fail my intent as they see it.
I'll name not over them a fourth:
As they desire in all, so be it.

CLXXII

Des testamens qu'on dit le maistre
De mon faict n'aura quid *ne* quod;
Mais ce sera ung jeune prebstre,
Qui se nomme Colas Tacot.
Voulentiers beusse à son escot,
Et qu'il me coustast ma cornette!
S'il sceust jouer en ung trippot,
Il eust de moy le Trou Perrette.

CLXXIII

Quant au regard du luminaire,
Guillaume du Ru j'y commectz.
Pour porter les coings du suaire,
Aux executeurs le remectz.
Trop plus mal me font qu'oncques mais
Penil, cheveulx, barbe, sourcilz.
Mal me presse; est temps desormais
Que crie à toutes gens mercis.

CLXXII

The Probate Court in not the least
Shall meddle, neither *quid* nor *quod;*
Let this be done by the young priest
Colas Tacot, at whose abode
I'd revel at his cost, I would,
Though it should cost me all my chips.
Could he but gambol *à la mode,*
I'd left him Perrette's Hole, gossips!

CLXXIII

The lighting of the chandelier
To William du Ru I commit;
As for the bearers of the bier,
Let my executors manage it.
Disease has caused my hair to flit:
Curls, beard and brows no more shall be;
Pain rings me round; it's time to quit
And cry to all men, pardon me!

BALLADE

Par laquelle Villon crye mercy à chascun.

A Chartreux, aussi Celestins,
A mendians et aux devotes,
A musars et cliquepatins,
Servantes et filles mignottes,
Portant surcotz et justes cottes;
A cuyderaulx d'amours transis,
Chaussans sans meshaing fauves bottes,
Je crye à toutes gens merciz!

A fillettes monstrans tetins,
Pour avoir plus largement hostes;
A ribleurs meneurs de hutins,
A basteleurs traynans marmottes,
A folz et folles, sotz et sottes,
Qui s'en vont sifflant cinq et six,
A veufves et à mariottes,
Je crye à toutes gens merciz!

BALLADE

Wherein Villon Cries Mercy of Everyone

To Chartreux and to Celestines,
To Beggars, Bogards and their sets;
To idlers, wooden-shod squireens,
To chambermaids and maids for pets,
In fine fur coats or thin jackets;
To fops that flirt insufferably
In fawn-top boots, like marionettes:
I cry to all men, pardon me!

To all the young bare-breasted queans,
Who earn their bread in love's duets;
To brawlers and to libertines,
To mountebanks with marmosets;
To strolling quintets or sextets
Of players, whistling lustily;
To widows and to amorets:
I cry to all men, pardon me!

Sinon aux trahistres chiens mastins,
Qui m'ont fait ronger dures crostes
Et boire eau maintz soirs et matins,
Qu'ores je ne crains pas trois crottes.
Je feisse pour eulx petz et rottes;
Je ne puis, car je suis assis.
Bien fort, pour eviter riottes,
Je crye à toutes gens merciz!

ENVOI

Qu'on leur froisse les quinze costes
De gros mailletz, fortz et massis,
De plombée et de telz pelottes,
Je crye à toutes gens merciz!

Except those treacherous dogs of deans
Who made me eat in oubliettes
And drink, each day, from cold canteens—
I care for them not three stool-sweats.
I'd belch or fart at such gourmets,
Except I cannot, sitting—see?
Well, to save riots and regrets,
I cry to all men, pardon me!

ENVOI

Their fifteen ribs if one but frets
With massive mauls, unsparingly,
Or salts them well with lead pellets,
I cry to all men, pardon me!

BALLADE
POUR SERVIR DE CONCLUSION

Icy se clost le Testament
Et finist du pouvre Villon.
Venez à son enterrement,
Quant vous orrez le carillon,
Vestuz rouges com vermillon,
Car en amours mourut martir;
Ce jura-il sur son coullon
Quand de ce monde voult partir.

Et je croy bien que pas n'en ment,
Car chassié fut comme un soullon
De ses amours hayneusement,
Tant que, d'icy à Roussilon,
Brosses n'y a ne brossillon,
Qui n'eust, ce dit-il sans mentir,
Ung lambeau de son cotillon,
Quand de ce monde voult partir.

BALLADE
TO SERVE AS CONCLUSION

Here, then, is closed the Testament
And all of poor Villon is said.
Come to his burial and lament
When chime the bells; come robed in red
With cloaks of crimson overspread,
He being a martyr to love's dart;
Which thing he swore on his yard-head
When from the world he thought to part.

I well believe him, I'll assent,
Knowing him beaten till he bled,
Fleeing from love malevolent,
From here to Roussillon; he shed
Tatter by tatter, every thread
Of garment on the brambles swart,
Maintaining this till he was dead
When from the world he thought to part.

Il est ainsi, et tellement,
Quand mourut n'avoir qu'un haillon.
Qui plus: en mourant, mallement
L'espoignoit d'amours l'esguillon;
Plus agu que le ranguillon
D'un baudrier luy faisoit sentir:
C'est de quoy nous esmerveillon,
Quand de ce monde voult partir.

ENVOI

Prince, gent comme esmerillon,
Saichiez qu'il fist, au departir:
Ung traict but de vin morillon,
Quand de ce monde voult partir.

FIN DU GRAND TESTAMENT

And thus and so it was he went
In rags and died without a shred.
Moreover, all his hopes were rent
Of love redeemed by pity led;
Sharp as a buckle's tongue were sped
His wounds, and sharper far the smart,
Whereat we all were dumbfounded
When from the world he thought to part.

ENVOI

Prince, gentle as a falcon fed,
Hear what he did at last: a quart
Of good red wine he killed in bed,
When from the world he thought to part.

END OF THE GREAT TESTAMENT

POÉSIES DIVERSES

DIVERS POEMS

LE QUATRAIN QUE FEIT VILLON QUAND IL FUT JUGÉ À MOURIR

Je suis Françoys, dont ce me poise,
Né de Paris emprès Ponthoise.
Or d'une corde d'une toise
Saura mon col que mon cul poise.

L'ÉPITAPHE EN FORME DE BALLADE QUE FEIT VILLON POUR LUY ET SES COMPAGNONS, S'ATTENDANT ESTRE PENDU AVEC EULX

Frères humains, qui après nous vivez,
N'ayez les cueurs contre nous endurciz,
Car, si pitié de nous pouvres avez,
Dieu en aura plustost de vous merciz.
Vous nous voyez cy attachez cinq, six:
Quant de la chair, que trop avons nourrie,

THE QUATRAIN
WHICH VILLON MADE WHEN HE WAS CONDEMNED TO DIE

I am Francis that's here shown,
Born of Paris, near Pontoise town.
Now in a six-foot noose of brown
My neck will know what my nates weigh down.

THE EPITAPH
IN FORM OF A BALLADE WHICH VILLON MADE FOR HIMSELF AND HIS COMPANIONS, EXPECTING TO BE HANGED ALONG WITH THEM

O brother men that after us shall live,
Let not hard hate within your hearts endure,
For as you pity us, as you forgive,
You, in your turn, shall grace of God procure.
You see us five or six hung up to cure,
With all this flesh that once we fed too well

Elle est pièça devorée et pourrie,
Et nous, les os, devenons cendre et pouldre.
De nostre mal personne ne s'en rie,
Mais priez Dieu que tous nous vueille
absouldre!

Se vous clamons, frères, pas n'en devez
Avoir desdaing, quoyque fusmes occis
Par justice. Toutesfois, vous sçavez
Que tous les hommes n'ont pas bon sens assis;
Intercedez doncques, de cueur rassis,
Envers le Filz de la Vierge Marie,
Que sa grace ne soit pour nous tarie,
Nous preservant de l'infernale fouldre.
Nous sommes mors, ame ne nous harie;
Mais priez Dieu que tous nous vueille
absouldre!

La pluye nous a debuez et lavez,
Et le soleil dessechez et noirciz;
Pies, corbeaulx, nous ont les yeux cavez,
Et arrachez la barbe et les sourcilz.
Jamais, nul temps, nous ne sommes rassis;
Puis çà, puis là, comme le vent varie,

Long ruined, fly-blown, only the foul shell
That we, the bones, must fall to ashes in.
Nay, do not laugh at evil sight and smell,
But pray to God we be absolved of sin!

We implore you, brothers, be not purposive
To scorn our plea, though we are here, 'tis sure,
By justice. Well you know that all men strive
Not equally, with equal souls and pure.
Heartily then, have pity and conjure
The Son of Virgin Mary, where they dwell,
His grace be given us and his love dispel
Doom of damnation in Hell's thundering din.
We are dead, nay, harry us not with jibe and yell,
But pray to God we be absolved of sin!

The rain has washed us through as through a sieve,
And the sun dried us black to caricature;
Magpies and crows have had our eyes to rive
And made of brows and beards their nouriture.
Never we pause, no moment's rest secure,
Now here, now there, as the winds fail or swell,

A son plaisir sans cesser nous charie,
Plus becquetez d'oyseaulx que dez à couldre.
Ne soyez donc de nostre confrairie,
Mais priez Dieu que tous nous vueille
absouldre!

ENVOI

Prince Jesus, qui sur tous seigneurie,
Garde qu'Enfer n'ayt de nous la maistrie:
A luy n'ayons que faire ne que souldre.
Hommes, icy n'usez de mocquerie
Mais priez Dieu que tous nous vueille
absouldre!

Always we swing like clapper of a bell.
Pitted as thimble is our bird-pecked skin.
Be not of our ill brotherhood and fell,
But pray to God we be absolved of sin!

ENVOI

Prince Jesus, who hast power to aid or quell,
Oh, help us from the tyranny of Hell!
We have no thing to end there, naught to begin.
Men, mock us not, being dead with never knell,
But pray to God we be absolved of sin!

LA REQUESTE DE VILLON PRÉSENTÉ À LA COUR DE PARLEMENT, EN FORME DE BALLADE

Tous mes cinq sens, yeulx, oreilles et bouche,
Le nez, et vous, le sensitif, aussi;
Tous mes membres où il y a reprouche,
En son endroit ung chascun die ainsi:
"Court souverain, par qui sommes icy,
Vous nous avez gardé de desconfire;
Or, la langue ne peut assez suffire
A vous rendre suffisantes louenges:
Si prions tous, fille au souverain Sire,
Mère des bons, et sœur des benoistz anges!"

Cueur, fendez-vous, ou percez d'une broche,
Et ne soyez, au moins, plus endurcy
Qu'au desert fut la forte bise roche
Dont le peuple des Juifs fut adoulcy;
Fondez larmes, et venez à mercy,
Comme humble cueur qui tendrement
souspire,

THE REQUEST OF VILLON PRESENTED TO THE COURT OF PARLIAMENT, IN FORM OF A BALLADE

All my five senses, hearing, sight and taste
And smell and you, my sensitive nerves, also,
And all my members, evil and disgraced—
Each in his turn and place, speak now, saying: "O
High Sovereign Court, whereby we live,
though low,
That kept us from a worse fate threatening,
Now that the tongue fails of sufficient thing
To say your praise—no blame therein to him—
All we join voices, child of a regnant King,
Mother of good and sister of seraphim!"

Break, heart, or open to cold steel and chaste,
But be not obdurate always—not more so
Than was the grey rock in the desert's waste,
Whereof the Jews found solace, long ago;
Come, tears, and render thanks, as may the slow
Deep-welling prayers that humble hearts up-
bring;

Louez la Court, conjoincte au sainct Empire,
L'heur des Françoys, le confort des estranges,
Procréée là sus au ciel empire,
Mère des bons, et sœur des benoistz anges!

Et vous, mes dentz, chascune si s'esloche;
Saillez avant, rendez toutes mercy,
Plus haultement qu'orgue, trompe, ne cloche,
Et de mascher n'ayez ores soulcy;
Considerez que je fusse transy,
Foye, pommon, et rate qui respire;
Et vous, mon corps, vil qui estes ou pire
Qu'ours ne pourceau, qui faict son nid ès fanges,
Louez la Court, avant qu'il vous empire,
Mère des bons, et sœur des benoistz anges!

ENVOI

Prince, trois jours ne vueillez m'escondire,
Pour moy pourvoir, et aux miens adieu dire;
Sans eulx, argent je n'ay, icy n'aux changes.
Court triumphant, fiat, *sans me desdire,*
Mère des bons, et sœur des benoistz anges!

Praise ye the Court, the Holy Empire's spring
Of good to all men under the world's brim,
Begotten in high Heaven and still being
Mother of good and sister of seraphim!

And you, my teeth, break from your jaws in haste,
Come to my lips and let your thanks outflow
Louder than organ, trumpet, bell—though faced
With food, forget to champ henceforth, arow;
Consider me condemned, all cold like snow,
Liver, head, spleen no more awakening;
And you, my flesh, or you're not fit to fling
To bears or pigs that live in wallows dim,
Praise ye the Court before its mercy swing—
Mother of good and sister of seraphim!

ENVOI

Prince, but three days deny me not to cling
Here to my friends and my farewells to wing:
I must have coin or meet starvation grim.
Victorious Court, amen! Yet hear me sing,
Mother of good and sister of seraphim!

BALLADE DE L'APPEL DE VILLON

Que dites-vous de mon appel,
Garnier? Feis-je sens ou follie?
Toute beste garde sa pel;
Qui la contrainct, efforce ou lye,
S'elle peult, elle se deslie.
Quand à ceste peine arbitraire
On me jugea par tricherie,
Estoit-il lors temps de me taire?

Se fusse des hoirs Hue Capel,
Qui fut extraict de boucherie,
On ne m'eust, parmy ce drapel,
Faict boyre à celle escorcherie:
Vous entendez bien joncherie?
Quand donc, par plaisir voluntaire
Chanté me fut ceste homélie,
Estoit-il lors temps de me taire?

BALLADE
OF THE APPEAL OF VILLON

What do you say of my appeal,
Garnier? Was it wise or no?
A beast will guard his hide, or squeal,
And if he's caught and bound, you know
He'll free himself if able; so
When there I was, my song unsung,
And all by trickery brought so low,
Was it the time to hold my tongue?

Were I of Capet's line and leal
(Who sprang from a butcher, long ago),
I'd not worn collar and cuffs of steel
Nor drunk my wine with such gusto:
You catch the run of my rhyming, though?
Well then, when a bird his head upflung
And sang me a text of hemp, oho,
Was it the time to hold my tongue?

Cuydez-vous que soubz mon cappel
N'y eust tant de philosophie
Comme de dire: "J'en appel?"
Si avoit, je vous certifie,
Combien que point trop ne m'y fie.
Quand on me dit, présent notaire:
"Pendu serez!" je vous affie,
Estoit-il lors temps de me taire?

ENVOI

Prince, si j'eusse eu la pepie,
Piéça je fusse où est Clotaire,
Aux champs debout comme ung espie.
Estoit-il lors temps de me taire?

Do you believe my brains conceal
No more of learning than but to blow
A sudden eloquent "I appeal!"?
There's more, if I am a trifle slow;
Howbeit I did not boast nor crow
When I heard that notary clear his lung
With, "You shall be hanged!" I ask you, 'bo,
Was it the time to hold my tongue?

ENVOI

Prince, had I had the pip, I trow
I had been dead as Clotaire—hung
Much in the way of some scarecrow.
Was it the time to hold my tongue?

LE DIT DE LA NAISSANCE MARIE

Jam nova progenies cœlo demittitur alto.
(Virg. egl. 4, v. 7)

O loué Conception,
Envoiée sà jus des cieulx;
Du noble Lys digne syon;
Don de Jhésus très précieux,
MARIE, nom très gracieux,
Font de pitié, source de grace,
La joye confort de mes yeulx,
Qui nostre paix batist et brasse.

La paix, c'est assavoir, des riches,
Des povres le substantement,
Le rebours des felons et chiches!
Très necessaire enfantement,
Conceu, porté honnestement,
Hors le péchié originel,
Que dire je puis sainctement
Souverain bien, Dieu éternel!

LINES
ON THE BIRTH OF MARIE

Jam nova progenies coelo demittitur alto.
(Virg, ecl. 4, v. 7)

Spirit of Birth Immaculate,
Sent once more earthward from the skies,
The Lily's scion consummate,
Beloved of God in Paradise,
MARY—that name shall re-arise,
The fount of mercy, source of grace
And joyous comfort of all eyes,
Once more as peace to Adam's race.

Ah peace! The glory of the rich
And of the poor the living wage,
Only despised of rogue in ditch.
O babe, so needful to our age,
Born of an honest parentage
Nor tainted with original sin!
What I say more, God hold it sage
And find no blasphemy therein!

Nom recouvré, joy de peuple,
Confort des bons, de maulx retraicte;
Du doux Seigneur première et seule
Fille, de son cler sang extraicte,
Du dextre costé Clovis traicte,
Glorieuse ymage en tous fais,
Ou hault ciel créée et pourtraicte,
Pour esjouyr et donner paix!

En l'amour et crainte de Dieu
Es nobles flans Cesar conceue;
Des petits et grans, en tout lieu,
A très grande joye receue;
De l'amour Dieu traicte, tissue,
Pour les discordez ralier,
Et aux enclos donner yssue,
Leurs lians et fers delier.

Aucunes gens, qui bien peu sentent,
Nourriz en simplesse et confiz,
Contre le vouloir Dieu attentent,
Par ignorance desconfiz,
Désirans que feussiez ung filz;
Mais qu'ainsi soit, ainsi m'aist Dieux,
Je croy que ce soit grans proufiz;
Raison: Dieu fait tout pour le mieulx.

Recovered name, the people's joy,
Hope of the good, of sin the shrine,
Daughter of God, and his envoy
By reason of his blood divine
From Clovis down the dexter line,
Image of Glory for men's ease,
In Heaven molded to refine
And give on earth good-will and peace.

The worship and the fear of God
From Caesar's noble loins are come
Till all men everywhere are shod
With hope of Christ's imperium;
For God makes love draw, as a drum,
The jarring tribes, fraternally,
And from envy and odium
Break fetters and set all men free.

Some men, who know but little good,
In poverty confined and fed,
Against the will of God they would
(By ignorance discomfited)
It were a son were given instead.
But for my own part, I protest
I think all's well, nor danger dread,
Since God does all things for the best.

Du Psalmiste je prens les dictz:
Delectasti me, Domine,
In factura sua! *Je diz:*
"Noble enfant, de bonne heure né,
A toute doulceur destiné,
Manne du Ciel, celeste don,
De tous bienfais le guerdonné,
Et de nos maulx le vray pardon!"

Out of the Psalms I take this phrase:
Delectasti me, Domine
In factura sua. I praise:
"O noble child, the stars betray
A noble destiny alway,
Manna of Heaven, gift of God,
Of all good works the guardian aye
And for our ills the staff and rod!"

DOUBLE BALLADE

Combien que j'ay leu en ung Dit:
Inimicum putes, *y a,*
Qui te presentem laudabit,
Toutesfois, non obstant cela,
Oncques vray homme ne cela,
En son courage aucun grant bien,
Qui ne le monstrast çà et là:
On doit dire du bien le bien.

Saint Jehan-Baptiste ainsi le fist,
Quand l'Aignel de Dieu descela.
En ce faisant pas ne meffist,
Dont sa voix ès tourbes vola,
De quoy saint André Dieu loua,
Qui de luy cy ne sçavoit rien,
Et au Fils de Dieu s'aloua:
On doit dire du bien le bien.

Envoyée de Jhesucrist,
Rappelles sà jus, par deçà,
Les povres que Rigueur proscript
Et que Fortune betourna.

DOUBLE BALLADE

However much I've railed at it
With *inimicum putes*—more—
Qui te presentem laudabit—
Yet, notwithstanding moods of yore,
I know that no man may adore
Beauty in whatsoever mood
And be the same as theretofore:
A man must say of the good the good.

Saint John the Baptist found it fit
To preach the days of Christ, and bore
Truth to the rabble's hearts in wit
Thundered as no man dared ignore,
Till Andrew heard in his heart's core
And praised God and no more withstood,
Giving himself to preach God's lore:
A man must say of the good the good.

Sent as we are on earth to flit,
Then forced to part with the clay we wore,
Fate will not aid nor manumit
Us fools of fortune, tired and sore.

Cy sçay bien comment y m'en va!
De Dieu, de vous, vie je tien . . .
Benoist celle qui vous porta!
On doit dire du bien le bien.

Cy, devant Dieu, fais congnoissance,
Que créature feusse morte,
Ne foust vostre doulce naissance,
En charité puissant et forte,
Qui ressucite et reconforte
Ce que Mort avoit prins pour sien.
Vostre présence me conforte:
On doit dire du bien le bien.

Cy vous rens toute obéissance,
A ce faire raison m'exorte,
De toute ma povre puissance;
Plus n'est deul qui me desconforte,
N'autre ennuy de quelque sorte.
Vostre je suis en non plus mien;
Ad ce droit et devoir m'enhorte:
On doit dire du bien le bien.

O grace et pitié très immense,
L'entrée de paix et la porte,
Sommaire et benigne clemence,
Qui noz faultes toult et supporte,

Yet is there light from that far shore—
O God, thou knowest if life be rude!—
Even by this child our faith restore!
A man must say of the good the good.

Here before God, then, I profess
That as the clay dies, I was dead,
Till by your dear birth love, lifeless,
Found faith again and all ill shed,
By charity and hope bestead,
And that which death had claimed as food,
Revived, lives now, and comforted:
A man must say of the good the good.

I make obeisance, O Princess,
Not more by rhyme than reason led,
With all the will that I possess;
My evil hours I'll no more dread,
No, nor the grey skies overhead.
All that I am is yours. I would
The world with me this way might tread:
A man must say of the good the good.

O heart of beauty limitless,
Gate to the vales where peace lies spread,
Of pity God's ambassadress,
Whence faults and follies are all sped—

Sy de vous louer me deporte,
Ingrat suis, et je le maintien,
Dont en ce refrain me transporte:
On doit dire du bien le bien.

ENVOI

Princesse, ce loz je vous porte,
Que sans vous je ne feusse rien.
A vous, et à vous m'en rapporte:
On doit dire du bien le bien.

. . . .

Euvre de Dieu, digne, louée
Autant que nulle créature,
De tous biens et vertuz douée,
Tant d'esperit que de nature,
Que ceulx qu'on dit, d'adventure,
Plus nobles que rubis balais;
Selon de Caton l'escripture:
Patrem insequitur proles.

Port assuré, maintien rassiz,
Plus que ne peut nature humaine;
Et, eussiez des ans trente-six,
Enfance en rien ne vous demaine.
Que jour ne le dit et sepmaine,
Je ne sçay qui me le deffend . . .
A ce propos ung dit ramaine:
De saige mère saige enfant.

Were I less rapt, then be it said
That I am foul of mind and blood;
Nay, for my lips to this are wed:
A man must say of the good the good.

ENVOI

Princess, this praise o'er your birth-bed,
Without whom I'd but weep and brood.
By you and to you, gold and red,
A man must say of the good the good.

. . . .

Dear work of God, with beauty showered
More than any of human kind,
With every good and virtue dowered,
Not less in body than in mind
(Which in another were but rind),
Brighter than noblest ruby's rays,
Of you, in Cato's phrase, we find:
Patrem insequitur proles.

Haven assured you are, and more
Is not for human soul to be;
And though my years are near two-score,
I find your infant mind so free,
I know not what thing hinders me
To cry each day, in accents wild,
A thing so very plain to see:
Wise mother, and therefore, wise child.

Dont resume ce que j'ay dit:
Nova progenies cœlo,
Car c'est due poëte le dit:
Jamjam demittitur alto.
Saige Cassandre, belle Echo,
Digne Judith, caste Lucresse,
Je vous congnois, noble Dido,
A ma seule dame et maistresse.

En priant Dieu, digne pucelle,
Que vous doint longue et bonne vie;
Qui vous ayme, MADEMOISELLE,
Jà ne coure sur luy envie.
Entière dame et assouvie,
J'espoir de vous servir ainçoys,
Certes, se Dieu plaist, que devie
Vostre povre escolier FRANÇOYS.

To quote again what you have heard:
Nova progenies cœlo,
Because it is a poet's word:
Jamjam demittitur alto.
O wise Cassandra, fair Echo,
Grave Judith, chaste Lucrece—what more?
All these you are and great Dido,
And my sole lady evermore!

I pray that Heaven, wholesome maid,
May grant you long and happy days;
Who loves you, Mam'selle, he has laid
Already much that slanders raise.
Perfect in all that merits praise,
I hope to serve you well in this,
So God permit, as owes and prays
Your own poor scholar (signed), Francis.

BALLADE VILLON

Je meurs de soif auprès de la fontaine,
Chauld comme feu, et tremble dent à dent,
En mon païs suis en terre loingtaine;
Lez un brazier friçonne tout ardent;
Nu comme ung ver, vestu en president;
Je ris en pleurs et attens sans espoir;
Confort reprens en triste desespoir;
Je m'esjouys et n'ay plaisir aucun;
Puissant je suis sans force et sans povoir;
Bien recueilly, debouté de chascun.

Rien ne m'est seur que la chose incertaine
Obscur, fors ce qui est tout évident;
Doubte ne fais, fors en chose certaine;
Science tiens à soudain accident;
Je gaigne tout, et demeure perdant;
Au point du jour, diz: "Dieu, vous doint bon soir!"

BALLADE OF VILLON

I die of thirst, hard by a fountain's rain;
Fevered as fire, with chattering teeth I'm rent;
In my own land I'm foreigner and vain;
I shake with cold though near a brazier bent;
Nude as a worm, I walk in rich raiment;
Laugh through my tears and without hope I dare;
Comfort I take in darkness and despair;
Enjoy myself, for whom joy has no zest;
Strong without force I'm powerful as air;
Welcomed as coming, sped as parting guest.

I'm sure of naught save what is uncertain;
Naught is obscure save what's most evident;
No things I doubt save such as men explain;
Learning I get by chance, without intent;
Winning I lose, remaining indigent;
At dawn I say "Good night!" and onward fare;

Gisant envers, j'ay grant paur de cheoir;
J'ay bien de quoy, et si n'en ay pas un;
Eschoicte attens, et d'homme ne suis hoir;
Bien recueilly, debouté de chascun.

De riens n'ay soing, si metz toute ma paine
D'acquerir biens, et n'y suis pretendant;
Qui mieulx me dit, c'est cil qui plus m'attaine,
Et qui plus vray, lors plus me va bourdant;
Mon ami est qui me fait entendant
D'ung cygne blanc que c'est ung corbeau noir;
Et qui me nuyst croy qu'il m'aide à povoir.
Vérité, bourde, aujourd'huy m'est tout un.
Je retiens tout, riens ne sçay concepvoir;
Bien recueilly, debouté de chascun.

ENVOI

Prince clement, or vous plaise savoir
Que j'entends moult, et n'ay sens ne sçavoir;
Parcial suis, à toutes lois commun.
Que fais je plus? Quoy? Les gaiges ravoir,
Bien recueilly, debouté de chascun.

Lying on my back I fear to fall, I swear;
Well paid, I've never any coin in chest;
Look for a legacy, being no man's heir;
Welcomed as coming, sped as parting guest.

Caring for nothing, always I'm in pain
To get me goods, though naught is consequent;
If one speak well of me, it is my bane,
And he speaks best who's most maleficent;
I count him friend who gains my firm assent
That white swans are black crows; and I declare
I think an enemy's hate is friendship fair;
Truth is all one with falsehood; for the rest,
Remembering all, I think of nothing there;
Welcomed as coming, sped as parting guest.

ENVOI

Prince mild of heart, know this all my prayer:
That understanding much, but with small flair,
Biased, yet calling every party blest—
What more?—let me receive my wages ere
Welcomed as coming, sped as parting guest.

EPISTRE
EN FORME DE BALLADE, À SES AMIS

Ayez pitié, ayez pitié de moy,
A tout le moins, si vous plaist, mes amis!
En fosse giz, non pas soubz houx ne may,
En cest exil ouquel je suis transmis
Par fortune, comme Dieu l'a permis.
Filles, amans, jeunes, vieulx et nouveaulx,
Danceurs, saulteurs, faisans les piez de veaux,
Vifs comme dars, aguz comme aguillon;
Gousiers tintans, clers comme gastaveaux,
Le lesserez là, le povre Villon?

Chantres chantans à plaisance, sans joye
Galans, rians, plaisans en faictz et die,
Goureux, allans, francs de faulx or, d'aloy;
Gens d'esperit, ung petit estourdiz;
Trop demourez, car il meurt entandiz.
Faiseurs de laiz, de motets et rondeaux,

EPISTLE
IN FORM OF A BALLADE, TO HIS FRIENDS

Have pity, oh, have pity now, I pray!
Friends, at the least have pity, if you please!
I lie in a pit, not under boughs of May,
In jail, not joy, in exile, not in ease,
Ill starred, God having helped my enemies.
Girls, lovers young and old, bridegrooms and brides,
Dancers and clowns whom dignity derides,
Lively as lances, sharp as needles slim,
With throats that ring like bells for leaps and slides—
This poor Villon, will you abandon him?

Ye singers out of key, who are so gay,
Laughing at pranks beneath the greenwood trees;
Ye roving rascals that with false coin pay;
Ye men of spirit, giddy-brained with lees:
Too long ye tarry, for his vitals freeze.
Makers or lays and rondeaux and bromides,

Quand mort sera vous lui ferez chandeaux.
Il n'entre, où gist, n'escler ne tourbillon;
De murs espoix on luy a fait bandeaux:
Le lesserez là, le povre Villon?

Venez le veoir en ce piteux arroy,
Nobles hommes, francs de quars et de dix,
Qui ne tenez d'empereur ne de roy,
Mais seulement de Dieu de Paradiz:
Jeuner lui fault dimanches et mardiz
Dond les dens a plus longues que ratteaux,
Après pain sec, non pas après gasteaux;
En ses boyaulx verse eau à gros bouillon;
Bas enterré, table n'a, ne tresteaulx;
Le lesserez là, le povre Villon?

ENVOI

Princes nommez, anciens, jouvenceaulx,
Impetrez-moy graces et royaulx sceaux,
Et me montez en quelque corbillon.
Ainsi se font l'un à l'autre pourceaux,
Car, où l'un brait, ilz fuyent à monceaux.
Le lesserez là, le povre Villon?

You'll brew him broth too late. Where he
abides
No storm wind enters and no lightning grim
Through the black wall that closes round and
hides
This poor Villon. Will you abandon him?

Come, look upon his piteous disarray,
Ye nobles free of taxes, tithes and fees,
Who hold from neither king nor emperor,
nay,
But have from God in Heaven your pedigrees:
How he fasts Sundays, Tuesdays too, till these
His teeth are grown like rakes'—his jaw-
bone grides
Dry bread, not cakes; how fallen are his sides
For water in his bowels, not soups; and dim
In this low hole table nor chair bestrides
This poor Villon. Will you abandon him?

ENVOI

Princes aforenamed, young and old besides,
Get me the King's grace sealed, and be you
guides
To draw me in a basket up to the brim.
For even pigs, when death to one betides,
Mass round to help him from the porricides.
This poor Villon, will you abandon him?

LE DEBAT
DU CUEUR ET DU CORPS DE VILLON, EN FORME DE BALLADE

Qu'est-ce que j'oy? *Ce suis-je.* Qui? *Ton cueur,*
Qui ne tient mais qu'à ung petit filet;
Force n'ay plus, substance ne liqueur,
Quand je te voy retraict ainsi seulet,
Com pouvre chien tappy en recullet.
Pourquoy est-ce? *Pour ta folle plaisance.*
Que t'en chault-il? *J'en ai la desplaisance.*
Laisse m'en paix! *Pourquoi?* J'y penseray.
Quand sera-ce? Quand seray hors d'enfance.
Plus ne t'en dy. Et je m'en passeray.

Que penses-tu? Estre homme de valeur.
Tu as trente ans. C'est l'aage d'ung mullet.
Est-ce enfance? Nenny. *C'est donc folleur*
Qui te saisit? Par où? *Par le collet.*

THE DEBATE
OF THE HEART AND BODY OF VILLON, IN FORM OF A BALLADE

Who's this I hear? *It's I.* Who? *Your heart,*
sir,
Holding to life by a thread; for I survey
Ambition gone and goods and all liqueur,
While you are left thus lean and lorn and
grey,
Like a poor beaten cur gone all astray.
Why is this? *Why? Because you've loved to*
dance.
What's it to you? *I bear the displeasance.*
Leave me in peace! *But why?* I'd think a bit.
You will think? When? When I am old,
perchance.
I say no more. Forget the rest of it.

What do you wish? To be rich and cause a stir.
Well, you are thirty. A mule's age, I say.
But is it childhood? No. *Then's the master*
Madness that grips you? Where? *By the*
neck. But nay:

Rien ne congnois. Si fais: mouches en laict:
L'ung est blanc, l'autre est noir, c'est la distance.
Est-ce doncq tout? Que-veulx-tu que je tance?
Si n'est assez, je recommenceray.
Tu es perdu! J'y mettray resistance.
Plus ne t'en dy. Et je m'en passeray.

J'en ay le dueil; toi, le mal et douleur.
Si fusse ung povre ydiot et folet,
Au cueur eusses de t'excuser couleur:
Si n'as-tu soing, tout ung, tel, bel ou laid,
Ou la teste as plus dure qu'ung jalet,
Ou mieulx te plaist qu'honneur ceste meschance!
Que respondras à ceste conséquence?
J'en seray hors quand je trespasseray.
Dieu, quel confort! Quelle saige éloquence!
Plus ne t'en dy. Et je m'en passeray.

D'ond vient ce mal? Il vient de mon malheur.
Quand Saturne me feit mon fardelet,
Ces maulx y mist, je le croy. *C'est foleur:*
Son seigneur es, et te tiens son valet.
Voy que Salmon escript en son roulet:
"Homme sage, ce dit-il, a puissance

Nothing you know. I know why flies will stray
In milk: one's black, one's white: this the distance.
Is this then all? Will you yet tempt my lance?
If you want more, I'll be more explicit.
You're lost! Ah well, I'll make some resistance.
I say no more. Forget the rest of it.

I bear the guilt, you but the pain, jester.
Were you but some poor idiot, I'd essay
To find excuse for you, I would infer
That fair and foul, being one to you alway,
Your head must be like marble; or I'd play
That honor's less to have than sad mischance!
What can you answer in the circumstance?
When I am dead, of all this I'll be quit.
O God, what comfort! What wise utterance!
I say no more. Forget the rest of it.

Whence comes this ill? It comes of my nadir
Where Saturn sat when I was breathed in clay.
Such I believe to be the source. *Toper,*
You're Saturn's master, not his slave, today.
For see what Solomon says in his good lay:
The wise man (so he says) has all puissance

Sur les planètes et sur leur influence."
Je n'en croy rien; tel qu'ilz m'ont faict seray.
Que dis tu? Rien. *Certe, c'est ma créance.*
Plus ne t'en dy. Et je m'en passeray.

ENVOI

V *eux-tu vivre?* Dieu m'en doint la puissance!
I *l te fault . . .* Quoy? *Remors de conscience;*
L *ire sans fin.* Et en quoy? *En science;*
L *aisse les folz!* Bien, j'y adviseray.
O *r le retiens.* J'en ay bien souvenance.
N'*attends pas tant que tourne à desplaisance.*
Plus ne t'en dy. Et je m'en passeray.

Over the planets and their ponderance.
I doubt. As I was made I must remit.
What say you? Naught. *I agree in THIS*
instance.
I say no more. Forget the rest of it.

ENVOI

V *ow you to live?* God grant continuance!
I *find you lack* . . . What? *Verily,*
repentance!
L *earn to read.* What? *Good doctrine, good*
guidance.
L *eave folly!* I'll consider if you'll permit.
O *nly remember.* I've good remembrance.
N *ay, tarry not till all is dissonance.*
I say no more. Forget the rest of it.

LA REQUESTE QUE VILLON BAILLA À MONSEIGNEUR DE BOURBON

Le mien seigneur et prince redoubté,
Fleuron de Lys, royale geniture,
Françoys Villon, que travail a dompté
A coups orbes, par force de batture,
Vous supplie, par cette humble escripture,
Que luy faciez quelque gracieux prest.
De s'obliger et toutes cours est prest;
Si ne doubtez que bien ne vous contente.
Sans y avoir dommage n'interest,
Vous n'y perdrez seulement que l'attente.

A prince n'a ung denier emprunté,
Fors à vous seul, vostre humble créature.
Des six escus que lui avez presté,
Cela piéça, il mist en nourriture;
Tout se payera ensemble, c'est droicture,
Mais ce sera légèrement et prest:
Car, se du gland recontre en la forest
D'entour Patay, et chastaignes ont vente,
Payé serez sans delay ny arrest:
Vous n'y perdrez seulement que l'attente.

THE REQUEST WHICH VILLON PRESENTED TO MY LORD OF BOURBON

Dread lord and prince to whom respect I pay,
Flower of the Lily, royal geniture,
Francis Villon, whom toil has tamed from play
By force of many a blow his bones endure,
Prays you in humble guise in this scripture
That you make some small loan at his request,
He waiving, in all courts of law, protest,
Should you retain a doubt of his intent,
Against all damage and all interest:
You will lose nothing of such money lent.

He owes no prince a single cent today,
Save to you only, your humble creature.
The six crowns lent before have gone their way,
Long since, for bread and simple nouriture;
All will be paid together, this is sure,
And it shall be done gladly and with zest,
If there are nuts to meet in the forest
About Patay, nor buyers abstinent;
You shall be paid without delay nor rest:
You will lose nothing of such money lent.

Si je pensois vendre de ma santé
A ung Lombard, usurier par nature,
Faulte d'argent m'a si fort enchanté,
Que j'en prendrois, ce croy-je, l'adventure.
Argent ne pend à gippon ne ceincture;
Beau sire Dieux! je m'esbahyz que c'est,
Que devant moy croix ne se comparoist,
Sinon de bois ou pierre, que ne mente;
Mais s'une fois la vraye m'apparoist,
Vous n'y perdrez seulement que l'attente.

ENVOI

Prince du Lys, que à tout bien complaist,
Que cuydez-vous comment il me desplaist,
Quand je ne puis venir à mon entente!
Bien m'entendez, aydez-moi, s'il vous plaist:
Vous n'y perdrez seulement que l'attente.

SUBSCRIPTION DE LADITE REQUESTE

Allez, Lettres, faictes un sault,
Combien que n'ayez pied ne langue:
Remonstrez, en vostre harengue
Que faulte d'argent si m'assault.

So I could sell my pleasant time of May
To some Lombard, usurious by nature,
My need of silver is so stern of sway
I well believe I'd dare the adventure.
No coin have I in purse or belt secure.
Great God! I marvel at the fruitless quest
Wherein no cross to me is manifest,
Save it be wood or stone—small increment!
But so the true cross make my fingers blest,
You will lose nothing of such money lent.

ENVOI

Prince of the Lily, who to all mean best,
Could you but understand how it irks me, lest
I fail to make you feel my being's bent!
Be generous, aid me as I here suggest:
You will lose nothing of such money lent.

SUPERSCRIPTION UPON THE FOREGOING REQUEST

Go, Letter, make a noble vault,
Albeit no feet you have, nor tongue:
Say in your own way what I've sung,
That I need silver more than salt.

BALLADE DES PROVERBES

Tant grate chèvre que mal gist;
Tant va le pot à l'eau qu'il brise;
Tant chauffe-on le fer qu'il rougist;
Tant le maille-on qu'il se debrise;
Tant vault l'homme comme on le prise;
Tant s'eslongne-il qu'il n'en souvient;
Tant mauvais est qu'on le desprise;
Tant crie l'on Noel qu'il vient.

Tant raille-on que plus on ne rit;
Tant despend-on qu'on n'a chemise;
Tant est-on franc que tout se frit;
Tant vault tien que chose promise;
Tant ayme-on Dieu qu'on suyt l'Église;
Tant donne-on qu'emprunter convient;
Tant tourne vent qu'il chet en bise;
Tant crie l'on Noel qu'il vient.

Tant ayme-on chien qu'on le nourrist;
Tant court chanson qu'elle est apprise;
Tant garde-on fruict qu'il se pourrist;
Tant bat-on place qu'elle est prise;

BALLADE OF PROVERBS

So scrapes the goat, she spoils her bed;
So pitcher's used, 'twill break some day;
So iron's heated, it grows red;
So hammer steel, 'twill bend, they say;
So value man as people pay;
So travel, memory fails in chums;
So much is ill we scorn it—nay,
So one call "Noel!"—why, it comes.

So one laugh, he'll have tears to shed;
So spend, you'll have no shirt to play;
So gossip, you'll have naught in head;
So count your chicks as wise men may;
So one love God, in church he'll pray;
So give not you must borrow sums;
So winds blow, we'll have winter's way;
So one call "Noel!"—why, it comes.

So one love dog, it will be fed;
So one hum tune, one learns the lay;
So one keep fruit, it rots instead;
So one beat walls, they fall in fray;

Tant tarde-on qu'on fault à l'emprise;
Tant se haste-on que mal advient;
Tant embrasse-on que chet la prise;
Tant crie l'on Noel qu'il vient.

ENVOI

Prince, tant vit fol qu'il s'advise;
Tant va-t-il qu'après il revient;
Tant le matte-on qu'il se radvise:
Tant crie l'on Noel qu'il vient.

So tarry one, he toils when grey;
So hasten one, he fails the drums;
So one will love, love will not stay;
So one call "Noel!"—why, it comes.

ENVOI.

Prince, so live fools they learn to bray;
So far men go they're only bums;
So one be taught, he'll no more stray;
So one call "Noel!"—why, it comes.

BALLADE DES MENUS PROPOS

Je congnois bien mouches en laict;
Je congnois à la robe l'homme;
Je congnois le beau temps du laid;
Je congnois au pommier la pomme;
Je congnois l'arbre à veoir la gomme;
Je congnois quand tout est de mesme;
Je congnois qui besongne ou chomme;
Je congnois tout, fors que moy-mesne.

Je congnois pourpoinct au collet;
Je congnois le moyne à la gonne;
Je congnois le maistre au valet;
Je congnois au voyle la nonne;
Je congnois quand piqueur jargonne;
Je congnois folz nourriz de cresme;
Je congnois le vin à la tonne;
Je congnois tout, fors que moy-mesme.

Je congnois cheval du mulet;
Je congnois leur charge et leur somme;
Je congnois Bietrix et Bellet;
Je congnois gect qui nombre et somme;

BALLADE OF TITTLE-TATTLE

I know why flies in milk will stray;
I know the rich man from the scum;
I know hard times from those of play;
I know an apple from a plum;
I know the tree by seeing the gum;
I know why blue is one with delf;
I know the toiler from the bum;
I know all things, except myself.

I know the coat by collar gay;
I know the monk by's pallium;
I know the master from valet;
I know nuns by the veils therefrom;
I know the quack by the nostrum;
I know why fools eat cream from shelf;
I know the good wine from the stum;
I know all things, except myself.

I know a horse from mule, I say;
I know their burdens' maximum;
I know Bee's face from Belle's by day;
I know the tokens used by some;

Je congnois vision en somme;
Je congnois la fault des Boesmes;
Je congnois filz, varlet et homme;
Je congnois tout, fors que moy-mesme.

ENVOI

Prince, je congnois tout en somme;
Je congnois coulorez et blesmes;
Je congnois mort qui nous consomme;
Je congnois tout, fors que moy-mesme.

I know of dreams that somehow come;
I know Bohemia's fatal elf;
I know boy, servant, man—ho hum,
I know all things, except myself.

ENVOI

Prince, I know everything, in sum;
I know of poverty and pelf;
I know that death will make us mum;
I know all things, except myself.

BALLADE DES POVRES HOUSSEURS

On parle des champs labourer,
De porter chaulme contre vent,
Et aussi de se marier
A femme qui tance souvent;
De moyne de povre couvent;
De gens qui vont souvent sur mer;
De ceulx qui vont les bleds semer
Et de celluy qui l'asne maine;
Mais, à trestout considérer,
Povres housseurs ont assez peine.

A petits enfans gouverner,
Dieu sçait se c'est esbatement
De gens d'armes doit-on parler?
De faire leur commandement;
De servir Malchus chauldement;
De servir dames et aymer;
De guerrier et bouhourder
Et de jouster à la quintaine;
Mais, à trestout considérer,
Povres housseurs ont assez peine.

BALLADE OF POOR STREET-SWEEPERS

They talk of those that toil afield
And stubble in the wind retain;
And of the husband that must yield
To shrewish wedlock's ball and chain;
Of monks that in poor cells remain;
Of men that often sail the sea;
Of those that scatter seed for fee;
And him that is a mule's jehu;
But when all things considered be,
Street-sweepers have their troubles, too.

To govern children as revealed,
God knows, is less of joy than pain;
To be a soldier, bearing shield
And keeping rules that lords ordain;
To fight fierce battles nor complain;
To serve the ladies gallantly;
To joust before a referee;
To ride at rings—are hard to do.
But when all things considered be,
Street-sweepers have their troubles, too.

Ce n'est que jeu de bled soyer
Et de prez faulcher, vrayement;
Ne d'orge battre, ne vanner,
Ne de plaider en Parlement;
A danger emprunter argent;
A maignans leurs poiles mener;
Et à charretiers desjeuner,
Et de jeusner la quarantaine;
Mais, à trestout considérer
Povres housseurs ont assez peine.

To harvest, though with muscles steeled,
And mow the meadows, I maintain
Is hard, nor is it play to wield
The flail and winnow chaff from grain;
To plead in Parliament's a strain;
To borrow makes for jeopardy;
Tinkers eat far less meat than we
Who fast till Lenten days are through;
But when all things considered be,
Street-sweepers have their troubles, too.

PROBLÈME OU BALLADE AU NOM DE LA FORTUNE

Fortune fuz par clercz jadis nommée,
Que toy, Françoys, crie et nomme meurtrière,
S'il y a hom d'aucune renommée
Meilleur que toy, faiz user en plastrière,
Par povreté, et fouyr en carrière;
S'a honte viz, te dois-tu doncques plaindre?
Tu n'es pas seul; si ne te dois complaindre.
Regarde et voy de mes faitz de jadis,
Maints vaillans homs par moy mors et roidiz,
Et n'eusses-tu envers eulx ung soullon,
Appaise-toi, et mectz fin en tes diz:
Par mon conseil prends tout en gré, Villon!

Contre grans roys je me suis bien armée,
Le temps qui est passé; car, en arrière,
Priame occis et toute son armée;
Ne lui valut tour, donjon, ne barrière.
Et Hannibal, demoura-il derrière?

BALLADE OF THE RIDDLE OF THE NAME OF FORTUNE

Fortune they named me in an older day,
Whom you, Francis, will slander for despair.
Is there no other genius you survey
(Better than you) forced to go lean and bare
And toil for bread and forego fame for care?
If you know shame, must you therefore complain?
You're not alone of poor men rich in brain.
Reflect and weigh how, in the time that's dead,
I have had many a brave man's life-blood shed,
Of whose large talents you've but the soupçon.
Peace and have done before your days are sped:
I advise you, grin and bear it all, Villon!

I have gone forth against great kings in fray
Aforetime: well you know of that affair
Where Priam died with all his vast array,
Towers and walls being vain to keep them there;
Remember Hannibal and be aware

En Cartaige, par moy, le feiz actaindre;
Et Scypion l'Affricquain feiz estaindre;
Julius Cesar au senate je vendiz;
En Egipte Pompée je perdiz;
En mer noyay Jazon en ung boullon;
Et, une fois, Romme et Rommains ardiz . . .
Par mon conseil prends tout en gré, Villon!

Alexandre, qui tant fist de hamée,
Qui voulut voir l'estoille poucynière,
Sa personne par moy fut inhumée.
Alphasar roy, en champ, sous la bannière,
Ruay jus mort, cela est ma manière.
Ainsi l'ay fait, ainsi le maintendray;
Autre cause ne raison n'en rendray.
Holofernes l'ydolastre mauldiz,
Qu'occist Judic (et dormoit entandiz!)
De son poignart, dedens son pavillon;
Absallon, quoy! en fuyant suspendis . . .
Par mon conseil prends tout en gré, Villon!

ENVOI

Povre Françoys, escoute que tu dis
Se rien peusse sans Dieu de paradiz,
A toy n'aultre ne demourroit haillon:
Car pour ung mal lors j'en feroye dix:
Par mon conseil prends tout en gré, Villon!

'Twas I in Carthage gave him mortal stain;
And Scipio Africanus killed amain;
And Julius Caesar to the Senate led;
On shores Egyptian took I Pompey's head;
And Jason drowned like may-fly in bouillon;
Aye, and burnt Rome and Romans unfriended . . .
I advise you, grin and bear it all, Villon!

That bloody Alexander, man's dismay,
Who to the very stars could dream and dare,
I buried him. There is no more to say.
Arphaxad, with his banners and his blare
Of trumpets, him I slew. I never spare.
As I have done, so will I do again;
I will not reason of it nor explain.
I cursed the idolatrous Holofernes—bled
By Judith (sleeping on a banquet-bed)
With his own blade, in tent of abandon;
And Absalom, ha! I hanged him as he fled . . .
I advise you, grin and bear it all, Villon!

ENVOI

Poor Francis, ponder well what I have said.
Nay, but for God, I'd leave no man a shred;
I'd scourge not with the rod but the scorpion:
For every ill I'd give you ten more dread . . .
I advise you, grin and bear it all, Villon!

BALLADE CONTRE LES MESDISANS DE LA FRANCE

Rencontré soit de bestes feu gectans,
Que Jason vit, querant la Toison d'or;
Ou transmué d'homme en beste, sept ans,
Ainsi que fut Nabugodonosor;
Ou bien ait perte aussi griefve et villaine
Que les Troyons pour la prinse d'Heleine;
Ou avallé soit avec Tantalus
Et Proserpine aux infernaulx pallus,
Ou plus que Job soit en griefve souffrance,
Tenant prison en la court Dedalus,
Qui mal vouldroit au royaume de France!

Quatre mois soit en un vivier chantant,
La teste au fons, ainsi que le butor;
Ou au Grand-Turc vendu argent contant,
Pour estre mis au harnois comme ung tor;
Ou trente ans soit, comme la Magdelaine,
Sans vestir drap de linge ne de laine;
Ou noyé soit, comme fut Narcisus;

BALLADE AGAINST THE SLANDERERS OF FRANCE

May he meet dragons belching fire that sears,
Like Jason, searching for the Fleece of Gold;
Be metamorphosed into beast seven years,
As to King Nebuchadnezzar chanced of old;
Or suffer ruin in so villainous shape
As came to Trojans after Helen's rape;
Or be with Tantalus descended well—
And Proserpine—to the steaming swamps of Hell;
Or more than Job's let him endure mischance;
In Daedalus' labyrinth be forced to dwell,
Who wishes evil to the realm of France!

Let him be buried head beneath his rears
In bog, like bittern, till four months are told;
Or to the Grand Turk, harnessed in hard gears,
Like a dull ox, let him be caught and sold;
Or thirty years, like Magdalen, without drape
Of linen neither wool from heel to nape;
Or drowned, Narcissus-like, as legends tell;

Ou aux cheveux, comme Absalon, pendus,
Ou comme fut Judas par desperance;
Ou puist mourir comme Simon Magus,
Qui mal vouldroit au royaume de France!

D'Octovien puisse venir le temps:
C'est qu'on luy coule au ventre son trésor;
Ou qu'il soit mis entre meules flotans,
En un moulin, comme fut saint Victor;
Ou transgloutis en la mer, sans haleine,
Pis que Jonas au corps de la baleine;
Ou soit banny de la clarté Phoebus,
Des biens June et du soulas Venus,
Et du grant Dieu soit mauldit à outrance,
Ainsi que fut roy Sardanapalus,
Qui mal vouldroit au royaume de France!

ENVOI

Prince, porté soit des clers Eolus,
En la forest où domine Glocus,
Ou privé soit de paix et d'espérance,
Car digne n'est de posseder vertus,
Qui mal vouldroit au royaume de France!

Or hung, like Absalom, by the hair to yell;
Aye, or like Judas, hopeless of joyance;
Or even with Simon Mage drawn parallel,
Who wishes evil to the realm of France!

Were it Octavian's time of myriad fears
He should have money, all his guts would
hold;
Be ground by millstones, spite of groans and
tears,
As was Saint Victor; or have manifold
More strugglings in the sea, black as an ape
For choking, than had Jonah trying to escape
The whale's dark belly; or from Phoebus'
spell,
Juno's good gifts and Venus' sweet brothel
He should be banned, and cursed by God's
vengeance,
And like Sardanapalus rot and smell,
Who wishes evil to the realm of France!

ENVOI

Prince, let the winds of Aeolus rouse and
swell
And bear him to the power of Glaucus fell
Where peace and hope relieve not his durance;
For he's worth naught, the swinish infidel,
Who wishes evil to the realm of France!

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